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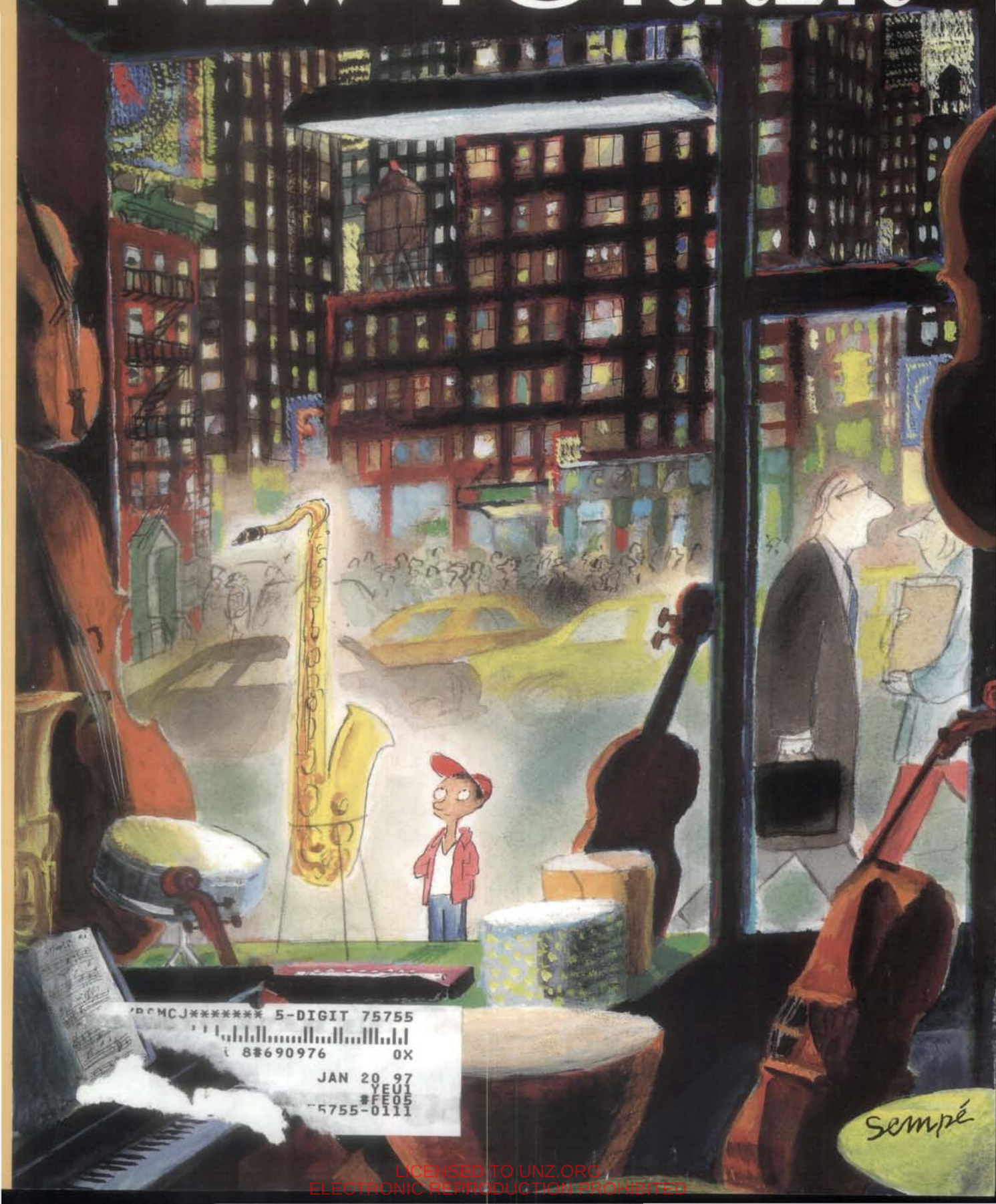

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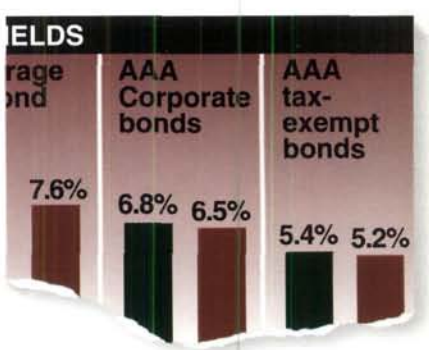

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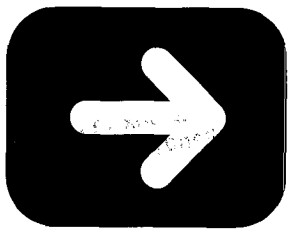

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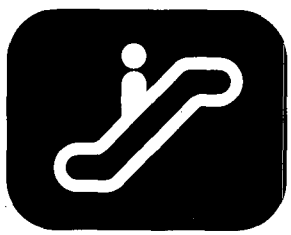

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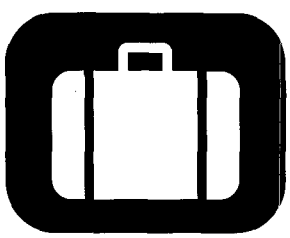

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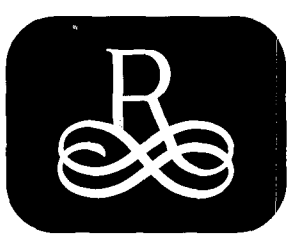

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THE NEW YORKER

FEBRUARY 5, 1996

COMMENT Scenes from a Scandal . . . . . *David Remnick* 4
The things we never learned from Watergate.

IN THE MAIL 6

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 8

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 23
White House war of words; the computerized jury; etc.

DEPARTMENTS

Annals of Show Business Bully Boy . . . . . *John Gregory Dunne* 26
Don Simpson was outrageous, erratic, and a great producer.

Paris Journal Cinéma Disputé . . . . . *Adam Gopnik* 32
What does a star moviemaker have to fear from intellectuals? In France, everything.

A REPORTER AT LARGE The Next Prime Minister . . . . . *Sidney Blumenthal* 38
Who is Tony Blair—chic yuppie, pretty-faced Stalin, political Bambi, or a new world leader? Photograph by Richard Avedon.

AT THE GALLERIES The Art of the Brontës . . . . . *Mary Hawthorne* 48

PERSONAL HISTORY This Wild Darkness . . . . . *Harold Brodkey* 52
Entries from the journal of the author, who died last Friday. Photographs by Richard Avedon.

FICTION "Ask Me, Ask Me, Ask Me" . . . . . *Roddy Doyle* 56
A love story in Dublin.

FAMILY ALBUM Arthur Getz . . . . . *Lee Lorenz* 62

THE CRITICS

Books Theodore Draper and Richard Brookhiser . . . . . *Michael Lind* 68
The works of Sony Labou Tansi . . . . . *John Updike* 70
Showcase Frank Langella . . . . . *Richard Avedon, Brendan Lemon* 72
Books Briefly Noted 74
The Current Cinema "White Squall," "From Dusk till Dawn" . . . . . *Terrence Rafferty* 75
Jazz The tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano . . . . . *Whitney Balliett* 78

POEMS

"That Vase of Lilacs" . . . . . *Kay Ryan* 28
"Reflections in an Extended Kitchen" . . . . . *Clive James* 40
"Hubris" . . . . . *Mary Karr* 64

SHOUTS & MURMURS Hillary Pilloried . . . . . *Christopher Buckley* 80

COVER *The Boy Who Wanted to Be President, by J. J. Sempé*

DRAWINGS *Roz Chast, Leo Cullum, Dean Vietor, Frank Cotham, François Berthoud, Edward Koren, Michael Crawford, Mick Stevens, Danny Shanahan, Charles Barsotti*

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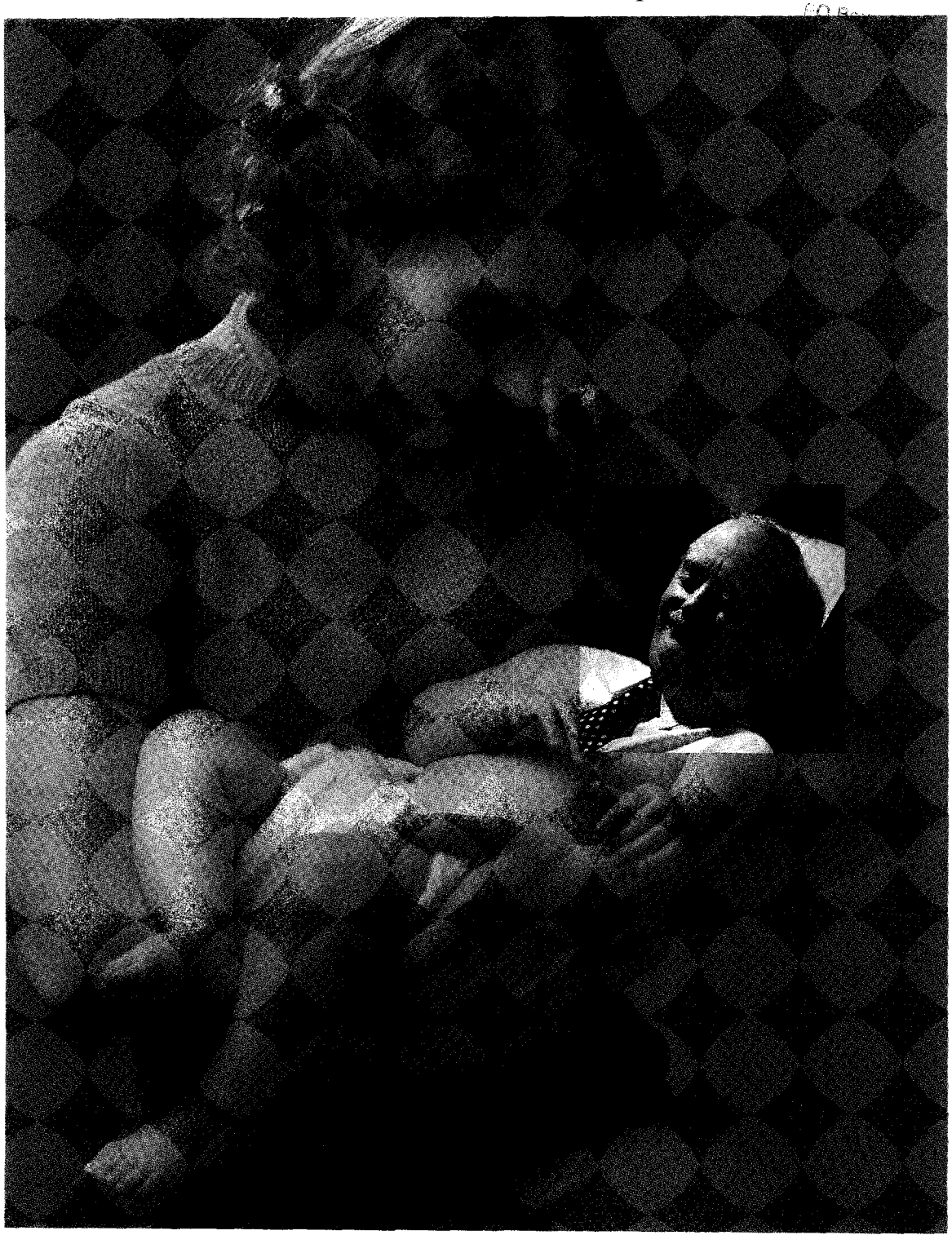

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SCENES FROM A SCANDAL

Why can't the children of Watergate get it right?

UNTIL Oliver Stone finally signs a contract with the author known as Anonymous to write "Hillary: The Movie," America is unlikely to begin understanding the national drama now unspooling before us. The movie is not difficult to anticipate: Meryl Streep as Hillary Rodham Clinton, her hair done up in a steely flip, roaming the crepuscular halls of the West Wing, swilling Chardonnay from the bottle and shrieking to the heavens. Careering down the halls, she shreds subpoenas and abuses ghostwriters (in a perfect Illinois-Arkansas-Yale accent). Meanwhile, the President, played by a doughnut-thickened Nick Nolte, is upstairs in the Lincoln Bedroom with the granddaughter of Colonel X, raving about the "the system" and, all the while, feeling the poor girl's pain.

Meanwhile, as we wait for Mr. Stone and Anonymous, we have sour and bewildering reality to contemplate. It is amazing (but true) that Whitewater has been with us far longer than Watergate ever was: it's been going on for almost four years. Watergate began and ended, with a President's resignation, in little more than two; and, what's more, its narrative of misdeeds and its cast of characters were never less than vivid.

What is Whitewater really about? The polls show that most Americans know very little and care even less. But, with the economy relatively strong and foreign policy going well, the Republican Party has grabbed the Whitewater cudgel with the firm intention of beating down the White House door come November. Considering Robert Dole's feeble response and waxen visage after the State of the Union speech last week, their singular hope may be Whitewater warfare.

Do not believe for one moment that Clinton loyalists aren't worried by such a strategy. "I hate to say it, but it could sink Clinton," one Adminstration aide remarked the other day. "This is a serious issue of trust. It's not about Whitewater or banks. What it has to do with is this: Is the President a goddam liar? And, if Hillary is proved a liar, he is, too, because he has backed her up. Believe me, the Republicans won't be shy about making the connection."

So far, the Clintons have aggravated their position with two colossal political errors. The first was the decision to put Hillary Clinton in charge of health-care reform. She assumed an outsize role for which she had no great qualifications and no mandate besides matrimony. That move reeked of presumption and heightened her profile beyond reason. The second error was the couple's decision, in the face of Whitewater, to act like cartoon-

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ish lawyers. How could the Clintons, students of Watergate, not have learned the central lesson of that affair: release your information quickly and completely. Having failed to do it, they took the "limited modified hangout route," and Hillary Clinton is now suffering the fate of being adjudged a liar for not promptly releasing documents that seem relatively exculpatory.

The affair is also fuelled by a peculiar set of historical and personal tics. Whitewater has evoked all kinds of questions, idle or not, about the ethical habits of baby boomers, and about modern marriage. Sometimes the commentary on the Clintons, much of it written by men and women of their generation, has about it the quality not of political analysis but of analysis plain—cheap psychology. Furthermore, the Clintons occasionally mistake self-serving sanctimony for moral leadership. (Why *was* Elie Wiesel seated next to the First Lady for the State of the Union Address, if not to drape her in goodness?) They help paint the bull's-eye on themselves.

And yet it is worth asking what the truly scandalous component of all this is. What is its scale? How can it compare with the Bay of Pigs, to say nothing of shagging a gangster's moll in the White House? How does it stack up against the Gulf of Tonkin fraud and the nagging fact that L.B.J. made millions of dollars as a United States senator? Then Watergate. And what of the most far-reaching scandal of all, the Reagan Administration's Iran-Contra fiasco? Or how about Iraqgate, under George Bush? Has the President, as yet, made a moral error to compare with the sterling moments of his predecessors?

To a degree, the affair is a product of modern electoral politics. Until the reforms of the late nineteen-sixties, political bosses and rank-and-file workers dominated the nominating process for the Presidential candidates of both parties. As a result, the nominees tended to be politicians who had been working on the national scene for quite a while. Their strengths, their foibles, and their histories tended to be a matter of record. Jimmy Carter broke the mold in the 1976 race when he suddenly emerged from relative obscurity.

Bill Clinton comes from an even smaller and more incestuous state than Carter's Georgia. If the "affair" called Whitewater has so far failed to come up with much in the way of crimes and misdemeanors, it has certainly revealed a political sociology: a low-rent atmosphere in which a few dozen people run the state, know one another all too well, and do right by one another. The images that characterize the scandal are like scenes in a novel written in the style of "gritty realism": a trailer park called Castle Grande; a bank that looks like a strip-mall burger joint; clubby lawyers and hustlers who deal in small-time favors and mutual back rubs.

And yet the Arkansas part of the story is just prelude. Anonymous will have to work a lot harder to capture the contemporary part of the drama: the White House being judged by Alfonse D'Amato (nudge, nudge, wink, wink) and a partisan prosecutor who was Solicitor General under Bush.

It would be foolish to maintain that the Clintons are merely handling their crisis badly. Their penchant for trimming at the edges of the whole truth is too deeply ingrained for us to assume the best of them. Something may emerge from any number of sources. But until then a sense of proportion is required. A few days ago, we heard about a hairdresser named Nada Davis. For more than half a year, her employer, the Salon Cristophe, in Washington, had dispatched her to the White House to do the First Lady's hair. (Considering the evolution of the First Hair, from bob to helmet, this cannot have been easy labor.) Ms. Davis visited the White House on a regular basis until one day she asked one of the First Lady's young aides when she might expect some payment. Ms. Davis says the aide then told her that she should be doing her work for the honor of it. After some time, Ms. Davis was paid in full, but she found it like pulling teeth. Finally, last spring, though she liked the First Lady and blamed only her staff for any unpleasantness, Ms. Davis gave up going to the White House. She didn't like having to extract her pay, nor did she feel she was getting much support from her salon. (The White House says that the billing was sluggish.)

In another time, this would be dismissed for the nothing that it is. But now what? By all means, call in the special prosecutor. Ring up Al D'Amato. And, before anyone asks, let's call it Hairgate. This could be the start of something big.

—DAVID REMNICK

WHAT TO DO IF SALMAN RUSHDIE SHOWS UP AT YOUR PLACE
① Prepare one of those tasty homemade casseroles you have stacked in the freezer.
I hope you like lasagna!
② Let him sleep in your bed, and you go sleep on the foldout
I don't mind! Really!
③ Mr. Rushdie loves American TV, especially daytime. So you can just SHUT UP about what you want to watch.
④ Don't invite the neighbors. You never know who knows whom, so why take chances?
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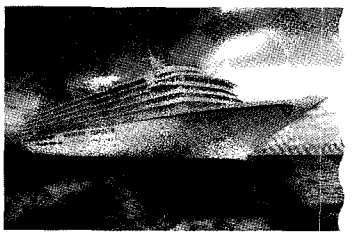

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CAN RWANDA RECOVER?

Philip Gourevitch's "After the Genocide" (December 18th) was the most honest and detailed account of what happened in Rwanda that I've seen. I lived with Tutsi refugees in Nairobi for several years and was married to a cousin of the current Rwandan Defense Minister, Paul Kagame, and I have never met, or even heard of, a group of people who have been persecuted as the Tutsis have been during this time. If the current, Tutsi-led government needs to run Rwanda in order to prevent more atrocities, then it should be supported by the international community; it is painfully obvious that members of the former government do not have enough morality or intelligence (since they killed most of the intellectuals) to govern. Maybe one day the country will be safe enough for my Rwandan son to visit his father and grandmother.

JULIE WYNNE
San Diego, Calif.

As the United States Deputy Chief of Mission in Rwanda in the early sixties, I was astonished at the depth of fear and hatred with which the leaders of the new republic—recently emancipated Hutus—regarded the Tutsis who were their former lords. The conflict was more like peasant revolts in the Middle Ages than tribal conflicts. A document signed by twelve Tutsi barons in 1958, four years before Rwanda became a republic, makes the situation clear: "Since our [Tutsi] kings conquered the lands of the Bahutu [Hutu] by killing their petty kings and thus subjugated the Bahutu, how then do they now claim to be our brothers? . . . The relations between us and them have been based for all time upon bondage."

W. NATHANIEL HARBEN
Alexandria, Va.

I teach the Holocaust to my world-history students every year, and every year one of the most consistent lessons they learn is "We mustn't ever allow this to happen again." Unfortunately, the Rwandan accountability commissioner seems to have been right when he said, "The international tribunal was created essentially to appease the conscience of the international community. . . . It wants to look as if it were doing something, which is often worse than doing nothing at all." Where is the sincerity of the Western world?

KEN BOICHUCK
Grimsby, Ont.

THE PERSISTENCE OF GREED

David Remnick's Comment about the resurgence of the Communist Party in the Russian legislative elections (December 18th) reminded me of the last conversation I had with my father, a pretty left-wing fellow, just before he died, in 1971. Commenting on détente, he said that capitalism will always be with us in some way, because greed is fundamental to human nature; and he added that, likewise, Communism, in one form or another, will also be with us, because envy will always be there when the aspiration of our greed fails us. Exhausted, he soon fell asleep, only to awaken several minutes later and add, "You know, the problem with capitalism is that it underestimates people, and the problem with Communism is that it overestimates people."

MICHAEL H. WEISS
Santa Monica, Calif.

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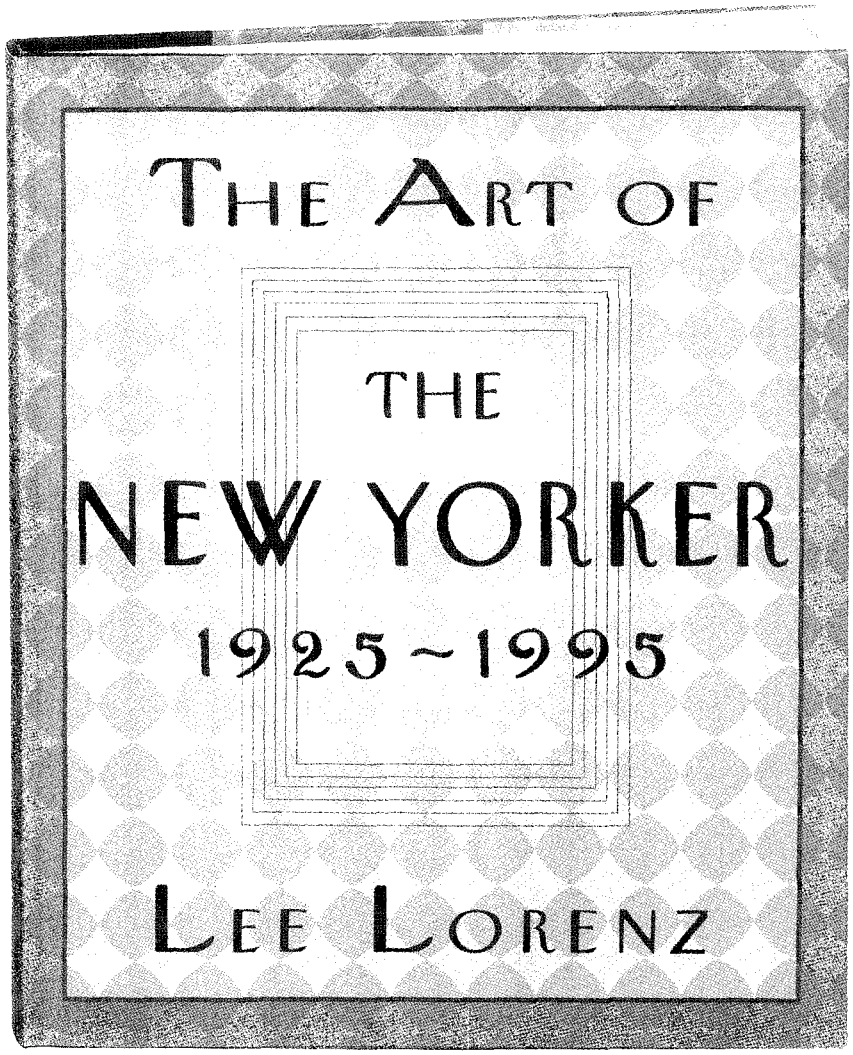

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bed and Sofa—A new musical based on the Soviet director Abram Room's 1926 silent film, about a working-class couple and a laborer who are thrown together during the Moscow housing shortage. Music by Polly Pen. Libretto by Laurence Klavan. Andre Ernotte directed. Preview on Jan. 31. Opens Feb. 1 at 8. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Blue Window—Craig Lucas's 1984 play centers on a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers. Directed by Joe Mantello. In previews through Feb. 4. Opens Feb. 6 at 8. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Bus Stop—Mary-Louise Parker, Ron Perlman, and Billy Crudup lead the cast in a revival of William Inge's 1955 comedy. Directed by Josephine R. Abady. Previews begin Feb. 3. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

A Fair Country—Laurence Luckinbill is an American diplomat whose family (Judith Ivey, Dan Futterman, and Matt McGrath) disintegrates after he tries to put an end to their long assignment in South Africa, in a new play by Jon Robin Baitz. Previews begin Feb. 1. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Rent—Puccini's "La Bohème" is the inspiration for Jonathan Larson's new musical, about a group of young East Villagers. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

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The Winter's Tale—The Pearl Theatre Company offers Shakespeare's tragicomedy. Previews begin Feb. 2. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

WordFire Festival—Josh Kornbluth opens the Watermark Theatre's annual solo-performance shindig with "Haiku Tunnel," based on his experiences as a temporary secretary at a law firm. Feb. 1 and Feb. 3-5 at 7:30 and Feb. 2 at 9:30. The festival continues through Feb. 18. (66 Wooster St. 966-9290.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Dark Ride—Len Jenkin's 1981 comic metaplay simulates a fairground ride (the audience is situated in the midst of a set that suggests a roller coaster) that passes through B-movie territory, both American and Mexican. An occult oculist, an unctuous gem trader, and a chef who travels with the putative mummy of John Wilkes Booth are among the characters whose stories are linked, whimsically if self-consciously, by the aggressively anti-linear principle of coincidence. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962. Closes Feb. 3.)

Dick Gregory Live—The master returns in a hilarious two-hour riff, skewering our fondest end-of-millennium hypocrisies and delusions with an astringent yet avuncular air. His bite, although it has mellowed with time, is still sharp as he ruminates on everything from Bosnia to O.J. to airplane travel. A production of the Negro Ensemble Company. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 18.)

An Epidog—In the final segment of Mabou Mines and the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's multimedia trilogy, "Animations," the Bunraku puppet heroine Rose—a feminist canine—is laid to rest. Since director Lee Breuer's theatrical cosmology borrows ideas (as well as costumes, props, and music) from Hindu and Buddhist sources, Rose's earthly demise is transitory, part of the cycle of birth and rebirth. Company regulars Frederick Neumann and Ruth Maleczech perform expertly as narrating deities; outfitted regally, they seem to float through Breuer's uninhibited staging. If only the howling, pop-mystical script came up to their level. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-9684. Closes Feb. 4.)

The Father—As the benighted protagonist of Strindberg's 1887 drama, Frank Langella is a revelation—in the nearly two decades since "Dracula," he's gone from feline to leonine, and when he topples into madness you feel an unexpected primal sympathy for him. Aided by Richard Nelson's straightforward new adaptation, which reinforces Strindberg's blunt vision, Langella explores every forbidding corner of the play's brutal psychosexual universe. Gail Strickland, who plays Langella's wife (and enemy), is irritatingly difficult to understand—get out your ear trumpet. Angela Bettis, as the unhappy couple's daughter, brings just the right amount of creepy coyness to her part. Directed by Clifford Williams. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/29/96.) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Food Chain—The situations in Nicky Silver's new play are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. *(9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)*

Frank Pig Says Hello—Ireland's Co-Motion Theatre Company, in a production of Pat McCabe's black comedy (based on his book "The Butcher Boy") about an unbalanced child in a small town who imagines that he is a swine. Presented by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22 St. 727-2737. Closes Feb. 18.)

The Grey Zone—Tim Blake Nelson's true story of the *Sonderkommandos*, the Jews who worked in the gas chambers and crematoriums of the death camps. David Van Tieghem's eerie, evocative sound design (the first thing we hear is the firing up of the ovens) is one of the finest components of Douglas Hughes's nearly flawless production (which also makes provocative use of silence, as when a man waits for the gas to do its work so he can do his). Nelson's strength is monologues, not narrative; the script begins disjointedly, and at first it seems no more than another reminder that the Nazis were evil. But the plot gels, the central characters struggle with the question of whether they are killers themselves, and the play—greatly enhanced by Gus Rogerson's blistering performance as one of the organizers of a rebellion—acquires shocking power (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes Feb. 10.)

The Hairy Ape—A limited-run production of Eugene O'Neill's 1921 drama, presented by

DAVID SANDLIN

Bruce MacVittie and Joseph McKenna, in "Dark Ride."

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the Wooster Group. Willem Dafoe, Peyton Smith, and Kate Valk are in the cast. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes Feb. 18.)

The Hope Zone—Olympia Dukakis stars in Kevin Heelan's new drama as a recovered drunk who has dedicated her life and her seaside resort to the comfort of alcoholic strangers. She's at peace reciting twelve-step cant to a visiting senator's wife, but she practically ignores her fiancé (Craig Bockhorn), and when her destitute, alcoholic daughter (Anne Scurria) shows up for help she attacks her. Heelan seems to be examining the hollowness of blind faith in systems, whether A.A. or organized religion, but he pushes the drama over the top with explicit analogies, throwing in blood, faith healing, and a preposterous Crucifixion tableau. By the end, Dukakis has had to go over the top herself just to hold her own, and all you want is a nice cocktail. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 4.)

Jam On the Groove—Ten loose-limbed numbers—including a slapstick shadow dance, a martial-arts fantasia, and a dance-noir detective story—show off the impressive range of hip-hop choreography, and the house rocks with a sort of call-and-response encouragement from the audience. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

King Lear—The New York Shakespeare Festival's clear and beautiful production carries the tale aloft on naturalistic wings, with sets, costumes, lighting, and sound that are exquisitely evocative in spite of their simplicity. The ensemble is strong, with Jared Harris giving a boastful, sad performance as the evil Edmund and Rob Campbell a tender one as his patient and virtuous brother, Edgar. Jeffrey Wright is an affecting Fool, and Thomas Hill seems to embody oblivious innocence in the role of Gloucester. What's missing is a monarch of stature: although F. Murray Abraham is touching once Lear has been humbled, early on he lacks the voice, the power, and the posture to project the blinding ego that betrays the king, and so his fall seems a short one. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Feb. 18.)

Master Class—In Terrence McNally's latest play, Zoe Caldwell portrays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Mata Hari—A revised version of Martin Charnin, Ed Thomas, and Jerome Coopersmith's 1967 musical, about the exotic dancer who was executed on charges of espionage and her love affair with the French secret-service agent who entrapped her. Presented by the York Theatre Company. Directed by Mr. Charnin. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes Feb. 18.)

Measure for Measure—In one of Shakespeare's odder plays, a duke who worries that he has been too lax in enforcing his subjects' morals appoints the most righteous man in the realm regent and disguises himself as a monk. The regent, however, is not what he seems, and the duke must put things right. The issues are whether moral questions can be decided by law and whether laws are made by honest men; and, with an unwed mother, an irresponsible father, and a betrayed fiancée (just for a start), the drama plays like an up-to-the-minute commentary on our own public controversies over religion and the family—though even in 1604 the answers weren't clear-cut. Barry Kyle's stark, stunning production (with a set design by Christine Jones and costumes by Constance Hoffman) creates the appropriate setting for the overflowing emotions. Presented by Theatre for a New Audience. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 17.)

Mrs. Klein—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory. Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama dissects Klein's tempestuous relationship with her high-strung daughter and shrewdly explores the autobiographical parallels to Klein's seminal thesis on the effects of parental neglect. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's 1994 play owes much to Oliver Sacks's case study "To See and Not See," about a virtually blind man who underwent two operations that temporarily restored his sight but permanently disrupted his way of knowing the world. Friel moved the setting from America to Ireland and made the main character a woman, but he didn't reimagine the material, and the play, which Friel directed, comes across as a staged reading of an essay. The three actors—Catherine Byrne, as Molly, Jason Robards, as the doctor who hopes to make her see again, and Alfred Molina, as Molly's foolish, blustery husband—sit in chairs or stand and address the audience, and they all end up overexplaining themselves. Molina, making his New York stage début, gives the play momentum with a terrific performance, but you'll find more drama in Sacks's piece than in this play. (1/29/96) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

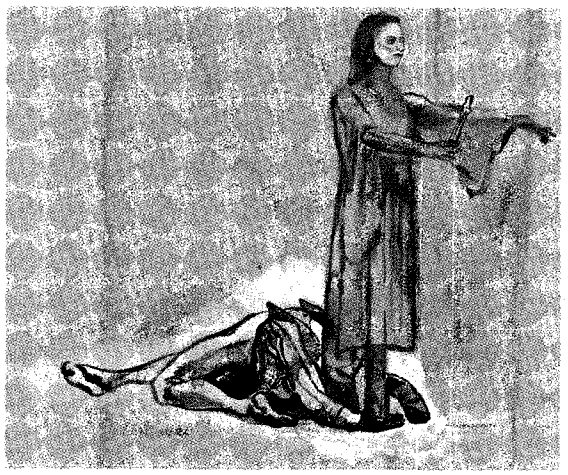
Moon Over Buffalo—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The One-Minute Play Contest—A fun and frenzied competition in which audience enthusiasm and a decibel metre decide which one-minute drama gets the fifty-dollar award at the end of each six-play heat; the full evening consists of eight heats, with the grand prize (two hundred clams) going to the highest scorer. Everyone leaves a little richer. Feb. 5 at 7:30. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 279-4200.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, is not so much a play of ideas as a play of notions, about art, science, the twentieth century (oh, *that* old thing); it features Einstein and Picasso, sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

The Preservation Society—A Southern family gets a shakeup in Wm. S. Leavengood's new comedy, in which a daughter's impending lesbian wedding puts other relationships to the test. Larry Pine, as the father (who reacts to others' pain by leading sing-alongs), and Bryan Clark, as the fiancée's stepfather (who smokes in the face of conflict), give funny, wistful performances as likable galoots who can't help being what they are. But even though Leavengood makes the female characters more complex, it's hard to believe they deserve as much immunity from blame as they get. In the absence of new insights into the family, the real message here is in the mess—the one that many people (hetero- and homosexual) make of their relationships. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Feb. 11.)

Sheba—The Queen of the fabled nation of Sheba, a country where women are the dominant sex, visits Israel and falls in love with King Solomon, in a musical that, with a nod to "Kismet," relies heavily on baubles, bangles, and beads. The production numbers are tightly directed, and the actors are beautiful (especially Tamara Tunie, who plays the Queen) and talented. But in the end a musical is about music, and though the tunes are pleasant enough they don't resonate beyond the theatre doors. Book and lyrics by Sharleen Cooper Cohen. Music by Gary William Friedman. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes Feb. 18.)



Peter Boal and Yvonne Borree, in New York City Ballet's "La Sonnambula."

PIER CONSAGRA

The Universe—In Richard Foreman's latest mind-wrenching vaudeville, three cheerfully desperate oddballs (James Urbaniak, Tony Torn, and Mary McBride) attempt to discover universal truths, behave normally, and find love in a thoroughly unknowable, abnormal, and inhospitable world. As usual, Foreman encumbers his actors with a funhouse set and delightfully unwieldy props. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (*11/20/95*) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Virgins and Other Myths—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life"—is an explicit though graceful dive into the depths of his own psyche. Martin goes on a bit too long (a full two hours), but he is always funny or affecting as he shuttles between a chronological narrative and psychological milestones in his life, including blissful childhood sexual explorations, an erroneous AIDS diagnosis in college, a period of promiscuity and prostitution, and an incident of violence; now and then he stops to wonder just when it was, exactly, that he lost his virginity. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Whiplash—In her latest one-woman show, drag king Shelly Mars gives an account of her childhood in rural Ohio and the events that led to her escape to New York. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Closes Feb. 4.)

Working Class—Almost every one of the eight laborers that Richard Hoehler portrays in his one-man show is disenchanted: a janitor at an A.A. meeting sees his life as a failure, a caterer admits that he is lousy at his profession, a construction worker could care less about a promotion. Hoehler, who has the posture of a stand-up comic and a voice reminiscent of George Carlin's, aims at putting humble yet heroic faces on the nation's workers (Whitman is quoted in the program notes, and Bruce Springsteen's workingman anthems pepper the soundtrack). But he barely penetrates the experience of his subjects, leaving their personalities as sketchy as the "working class" category itself. Chuck Brown directed. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434. Closes Feb. 18.)

The Yiddish Trojan Women—Three strong-willed Jewish women—a professor of mythology (Laura Esterman), a labor organizer in Guatemala (Lori Wilner), and an ambitious stand-up comic (Marilyn Pasekoff)—and

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their Polish refugee grandmother (girlishly played by Joanna Merlin) suffer the consequences of personal and political choices against the background of Brooklyn in the Age of Reagan. Invoking Euripides' Trojan women as mirrors for lives disrupted by desire and holocaust, playwright Carol Braverman extends Arthur Miller's brand of moral realism with meaty, intelligent female roles. Although the energy flags at times, the women's performances are accomplished and well balanced, and the lust object is appealingly embodied by Hugh O'Gorman. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes Feb. 4.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 31 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Firebird," "Afternoon of a Faun," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ Feb. 2 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," "Glazunov Pas de Deux," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ Feb. 3 at 2: "Divertimento No. 15," "La Sonnambula," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ Feb. 3 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Prodigal Son." . . . ¶ Feb. 4 at 3: "Square Dance," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ Feb. 6 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

DOUG VARONE AND DANCERS—Varone has moved dancers around with breathtaking speed (the daring fly-about exits and entrances in "Rise") and constructed concise emotional worlds (the claustrophobic triangle in "Aperture"); for "In Thine Eyes," which premières this week, he tries something new: spare, dry, almost robotic movements. "I wanted to get to an emotional level, not by addressing it overtly but by a more two-dimensional approach," he explains. His other new work, "Let's Dance (Riffs on Seven Vernaculars)," is a suite of solos, duets, and trios, set to the sort of forties boogie-woogie that his parents danced to in the basement at home. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 31-Feb. 2 at 8, Feb. 3 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 4 at 2 and 7:30.)

"BODY OF WORK"—To create her full-length ode to labor, the choreographer Dorothy Jungels reviewed motion studies of workers from the early industrial revolution and took the eight dancers of her company, the Everett Dance Theatre, to visit New England textile mills and talk with factory workers like those in North Adams, Massachusetts, who were laid off when the Sprague Electric plant became the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 31-Feb. 3 at 8 and Feb. 4 at 3.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"—Danspace Project combines a three-day showcase for seventeen choreographers with a food drive for East Village food-distribution programs. Tickets are half price for those who donate two canned items; the works in progress—by Phillip Adams, Kriota Wilberg, and Deborah Jowitt, among others—will be served anywhere from oven fresh to raw. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 2-4 at 8:30.)

"GENERATIONS"—The twenty-two-member Dance Consort, under the direction of Carol Mezzacappa and Craig Gabrian, presents recreations of works by Charles Weidman ("Submerged Cathedral," first performed in 1928, and "Atavisms," 1936) and Doris Humphrey ("Partita," 1942), as well as contemporary works by Peter Hamilton and Mezzacappa. (Lepercq Space, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 567-9620. Feb. 3 at 8.)

ICE THEATRE OF NEW YORK—The troupe continues to expand its repertory, commissioning new work from choreographers more frequently associated with the stage than with the rink. The first of their winter programs includes "Wintersprint," choreographed by Rob McBrien, and "Black Ice," by former Martha Graham dancer Donlin Foreman. (The Rink at Rockefeller Center, Fifth Ave. at 50th St. Jan. 31 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

"JAZZING WOMEN"—In conjunction with "Cookie's Harlem," an exhibition devoted to the life and times of tap dancer and comedian Charles (Cookie) Cook, jazz pianist and vocalist Teri Thorton and tap and sand dancer Harriet Browne perform together in this program. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. Feb. 4 at 3. No charge beyond museum admission.)

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

AIMEE MANN—Best remembered as the preternaturally blond leader of the late-eighties combo 'Til Tuesday ("Voices Carry"), this lovely and talented songwriter has spent the past few years enduring a firsthand seminar on the perils of the music business. Passed from record company to record company like a hot potato, she has finally settled in at Geffen and released a fine new album, "I'm with Stupid," some of which was previewed—believe it or not—on an excellent 1995 collection of music from "Melrose Place." (Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 777-6800. Feb. 1 at 8.)

DWIKE MITCHELL AND WILLY RUFF—Piano and bass duos. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 556-3865. Feb. 2 at 8.)

Eartha Kitt, at the Carlyle.

GLEN VELEZ—The percussionist and his ensemble. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. 545-7536. Feb. 2 at 8.)

JAMES WILLIAMS' INTENSIVE CARE—A gospel-flavored jazz sextet. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 2 at 8.)

BLACK UMFOLOSI—The Zimbabwean vocal group. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 545-7536. Feb. 3 at 8.)

ALANIS MORISSETTE—"Jagged Little Pill," the major-label début by this twenty-one-year-old Canadian whippersnapper, has now sold more than five million copies, which makes it one of the biggest débuts ever, a testament not to her talent—an above-average roar and a gift for compressing sexual outrage into pithy couplets—but to the scouting and marketing genius of the maverick who signed her, Madonna, mogul of the year. Someone get that lady a cigar. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 247-0200. Feb. 6 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Guitarist and vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI** (Bucky's son) is currently in the midst of an extended run. He's got loads of offhand charm and a terrific trio. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, and a gift shop. Through Feb. 4: **GRAND SLAM**, a supergroup featuring **JOE LOVANO, CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE, LEWIS NASH,** and **JIM HALL**, four supremely lyrical, formidable players. Saxman Lovano bolsters every dulcet phrase with granite heft; bassist McBride and drummer Nash turn rhythm into aural sculpture; Hall is, well, Hall—the Shakespeare of the guitar. And because dreams do come true (at least in New York), the agile pianist **MONTY ALEXANDER** is also on the bill. The **GEORGE SHEARING** trio and the **TAL FARLOW** trio take over on Feb. 6. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Through Feb. 3: the **GARY BARTZ** quintet. A real ace from the glory days of the late sixties, Bartz has come in from the cold with all his powers intact and an extra emotional edge. On an inspired night, when he feels like parading his unparalleled harmonic knowledge and dive-bomber drive, he's nothing less than staggering. His resurgence is a feel-good tale for the nineties.

CAJUN, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through February, the legendary **EARTHA KITT**. She is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. At the end of a song she'll throw back her head and laugh, like some kind of carnivore after the kill; she chooses her victims from the front row, and when the show is over there's blood on the tables. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance.

FIFTY SEVEN FIFTY SEVEN, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

FIVE SPOT, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom, this jazz club is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpet in the V.I.P. room upstairs. Dining.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Feb. 4: a double bill featuring the **WALLACE RONEY** quintet and the **BRAD MEHLDAU** trio. Roney is a young trumpeter who will really have to pull out the stops if he's ever to dispel the Miles-clone charges that have followed him around like a self-inflicted curse. Call it an understandably severe case of hero worship. Mehldau, an alumnus of Joshua Redman's band, is a fleet and fulsome pianist with a predilection for shifting time signatures; he also has a genuine fondness for Bill Evans. **RANDY WESTON** and his African Rhythms take over on Feb. 6. The great **LES PAUL** holds court on Mondays.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. Through Feb. 3: piano, bass, and drums with **STEVE KUHN, DAVID FINCK,** and **BILLY DRUMMOND.**

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Through Feb. 4: **HENRY THREADGILL.** Second-guessing the direction that this composer, bandleader, and saxophonist is leaning toward these days is a fool's errand. Wherever he turns, you can bet the music will be infused with a blend of exacting structure and joyous anarchy.

LE MADELEINE, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **GENE BERTONCINI** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA**, a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

SMALLS, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—An aptly named club featuring up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A jazz outpost where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through Feb. 4: the **BILLY HARPER** quintet.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. **LIONEL HAMPTON** and his orchestra continue through Feb. 4. Hampton's humming vibraphone began accelerating in the mid-thirties and has slowed down only in the last several years. His vibes still have their old lightsome swing—the easy chords, the legato glances at the beat, and the oval, mushrooming sound. He rocks church, as they used to say.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Feb. 4: the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**—which in its earliest incarnation, as the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band, breathed new life into orchestral jazz and since then has drawn people out of the house on Monday nights—gets a full week to celebrate its thirtieth birthday. Withstanding the loss of both of its founders as well as myriad personnel changes (the extremely gifted Jim McNeely is now the band's featured writer, arranger, and pianist), the group has yet to stumble: it's still sleek, well appointed, and dangerous enough to blow you out of the basement. **ART FARMER** and his quintet take charge on Feb. 6. Farmer's work on the flugelhorn proves that urbanity has its place even in jazz's spontaneous and emotional universe. By picking the perfect notes and playing them with a burnished elegance born of utter precision, he makes virtues of control and calculation. His sophisticated, ardent playing distills bop down to a pure lyrical state. Feb. 5: Hot-shot trumpeter **ROY HARGROVE** luxuriates in the warm glow of massed horns and rhythm.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club

BLAIR DRAWSON

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where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. **MOSE ALLISON**, who plays here with a trio Jan. 31-Feb. 1, is still making the world safe for pissed-off musical anomalies over sixty. Slamming the piano like Jimmy Yancey possessed by Monk and Bartók, he is nothing less than a national treasure. Feb. 6: The Roseanna Vitro quartet.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Feb. 3: **MULGREW MILLER** and **RICHIE GOODS.** Miller—a product of Memphis, a town whose jazz pianists invariably fall under the looming shadow of the legendary Phineas Newborn—tested his mettle with Art Blakey in the eighties; he can be loquacious, but his grand touch and sweeping attack are never overwhelming. His foil will be bassist Goods, who's shaping up to be a contender. Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

BLARNEY STAR, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Feb. 2: **ROSIE FLORES.** Feb. 3: **STEVE FORBERT.** The folk-rock troubadour from Meridian, Mississippi, appeared on the New York scene in the late seventies and released four albums in quick succession. After six years without another record, he resurfaced in 1988 with "Streets of This Town," a strong collection of tuneful, hopeful (but not mindlessly hopeful) songs. His next album, in 1992, was "The American in Me," a disappointing toss-off with none of the spirit or sad truthfulness of his best work. Still, little Stevie always offers a solid live show, and when he sings one of his full-bodied songs about love and longing and loss, his fans will have the pleasure of thinking, "Yes—exactly."

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Feb. 3: **JACK LOGAN**, a Georgia rocker whose 1995 début album, "Bulk," was culled from ten years' worth of raunchy basement tapes. His follow-up, "Mood Elevator," is a bit more polished, but it's still a charmingly jagged piece of work. With **XANAX 25.**

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront usually given over to a young Irish crowd.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Feb. 2-3: Guitar great **SON SEALS.**

CHINA CLUB, 2130 Broadway, at 75th St. (877-1166)—Glam seekers come here hoping to rub shoulders with models and celebrities but instead find themselves hypnotized by the big fish tank over the bar. Occasionally, rock stars do show up to jam after a performance in town, but mostly you'll find a roster of heavily moussed upstarts.

THE COOLER, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district.

DOWNTIME, 251 W. 30th St. (695-2747)—A friendly split-level bar with a dazzling quasi-Cubist paint job and an above-average pool table.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are in the house every Saturday night.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. Feb. 3: **"IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT."** A star-studded night of wonderfully strange music in honor of the wonderfully strange British record producer Joe Meek. A mad genius obsessed with the occult, outer space, and dead American rockers like Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran, Meek, working out of his dishevelled London home studio, created such singular hits as the instrumental "Telstar" and the Honeycombs' "Have I the Right?" In 1967, when the hits stopped and the money ran out, Meek killed his landlady and then himself—on the anniversary of Buddy Holly's plane crash. Get out your Ouija board. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

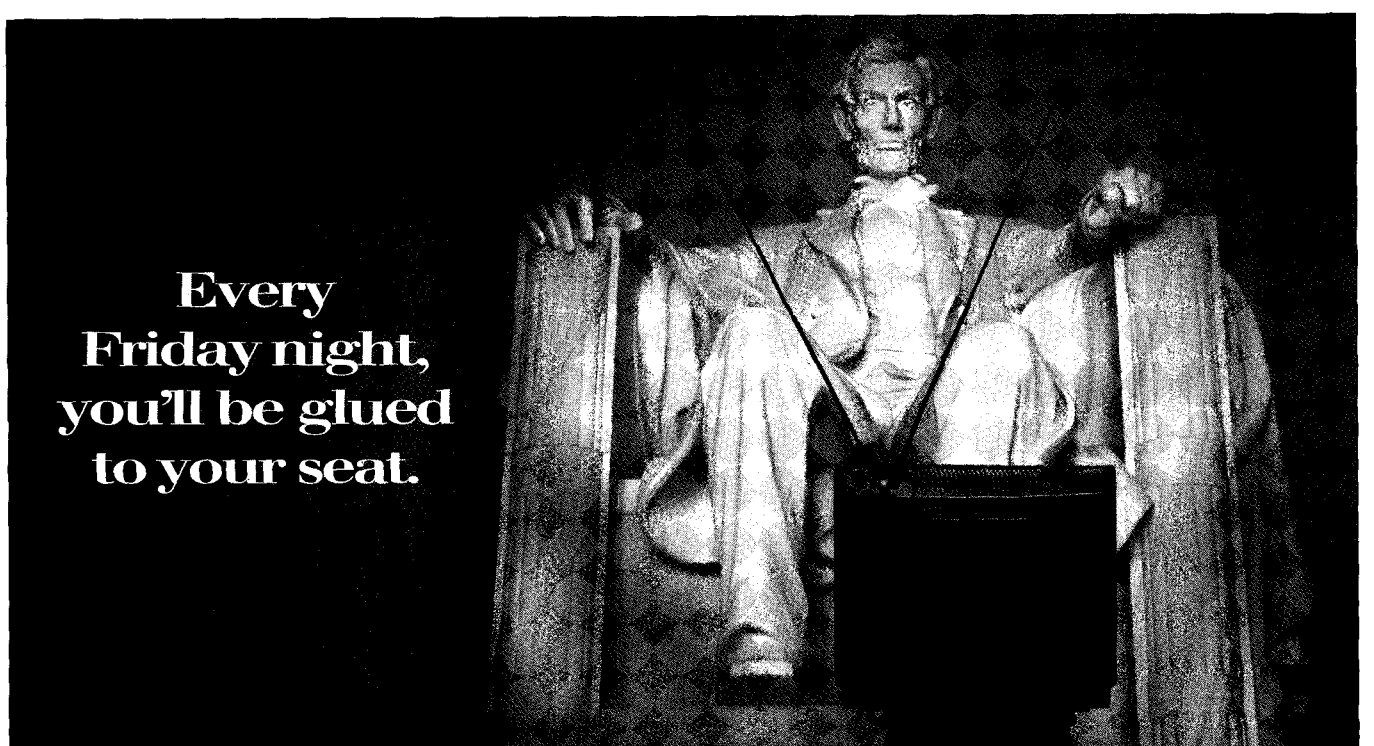
FLANNERY'S, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Feb. 1: **AIMEE MANN** (see Concerts). Feb. 2-3: The **RADIATORS**, a hardworking veteran New Orleans band with a loyal national following of "fish heads"—a rowdy bunch whose communal vibe falls somewhere between the Deadheads' and Jimmy Buffett's parrotheads'. Feb. 6 is Bob Marley Day, a fifty-fifth-birthday salute to the singer, featuring reggae by **SUGAR MINOTT** and **SISTER CAROL**. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—An unassuming basement restaurant-bar, where you can drink cheap and catch live music nightly. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO**, a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

MATCH, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Monday



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night, thanks to the SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND. Dining.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan 31: GARY LUCAS and PETER STAMPFEL. Feb. 1: The HUMPHRIES.

NELL'S, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop.

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—BLACK 47 plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—This plush night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab, is generally the home of torch singers and cabaret divas, but through Feb. 3 the joint has been given over to the three-headed team of MERRY CLAYTON, MARIANNE FAITHFULL, and DARLENE LOVE; they have put together a seamless musical revue, "Twentieth Century Pop," that works its way through the songwriting high points of the past three decades or so. Clayton is best remembered as the scary soprano on the Stones' "Gimme Shelter," but she also logged in a few years as the leader of Ray Charles's awesome Raelettes. She is the purest singer in the bunch, a devastating belter with a perpetual smile. That makes the inclusion of Faithfull (who also had a thing or two to do with the Stones) all the more striking. Her voice is still that wizened mix of honey, cigarettes, and gravel, and when she does her Weimar-cabaret version of Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody," she brings down the house. Love, the sixties chanteuse (her credits include work with everyone from Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra), is fresh from "Portrait of a Singer," her long-running one-woman revue at the Bottom Line, and she rounds out the evening with a few R. & B. chestnuts. Completely free of monologues and breaks for breath, this is certainly the briskest show in town, and it's a blast. ROSEMARY CLOONEY takes over on Feb. 6. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Playing his rock-and-roll hootchie-koo in the seventies, he may have seen his share of packed arenas and flaming lighters, but when all is said and done JOHNNY WINTER (Jan. 31) remains a shamefully underappreciated guitar slinger with the heart and soul of a real bluesman. Feb. 2: BILLY PRESTON and BUDDY MILES. Even if Preston had never scored hits like "Outa-Space" or "Will It Go Round in Circles," he'd still have one of the most impressive résumés in pop history: how many other keyboardists have played with Little Richard, Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones? Miles's back pages include drum stints with Wilson Pickett, the Electric Flag, Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys, and the California Raisins.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Feb. 1: TALKING TO ANIMALS.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The museum's African galleries are reopening on Feb. 1, after a nine-month renovation; on view are more than four hundred works from the kingdoms of Benin, Owo, Ijebu, Danhomé, Bangwa, and many others. . . . ¶ Events in the life of Telephos, a son of Hercules, were recorded in a narrative relief on the Great Altar in the ancient city of Pergamon, in what is now northwest Turkey. Twelve restored sections of the frieze are on view, along with a model of the altar, Hellenistic coins from the city, and architectural fragments. Through April 14. . . . ¶ "River of Gold: Precolumbian Treasures from Sitio Conte, Panama," a large trove of gold objects, from massive breastplates to delicate nose ornaments. Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ "Haute Couture." Detail and tailoring are the focus in the Costume Institute's examination of high fashion since 1870, from Worth to Lacroix. Through March 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—An installation of twenty-four Brancusi masterworks is on display; fourteen are from the Georges Pompidou Center, in Paris, the rest from MOMA's collection. Through April 23. . . . ¶ A large retrospective of black-and-white photographs from the late forties to the present by Roy DeCarava. Among the subjects are jazz musicians, street and subway life, and urban civil-rights protests. Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Michael Schmidt: U-NI-TY," a hundred black-and-white photographs by the Berlin native. The theme—reunification—is clear, but the presentation is oblique. Half of the pictures are Schmidt's; the other half are images rephotographed from newspapers, magazines, and propaganda literature. Through March 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Selections from the permanent collection are on view. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Joseph Cornell: Cosmic Travels." Box constructions and collages from the fifties and sixties by America's homegrown Surrealist; the imagery refers to ancient and modern conceptions of the heavenly bodies and their mysterious movements. The overused adjectives "lyrical" and "poetic" are hard to avoid in explaining the simple yet profound pleasure these works evoke. Through March 10. (Another show of Cornell's work is at C & M, 45 E. 78th St., through March 2.) . . . ¶ "Moving Out," a survey of photographer Robert Frank's career. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965." Through Feb. 4. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

CHINA INSTITUTE, 125 E. 65th St.—"Calligraphy as Living Art" features a wide variety of scrolls and celebrates the beginning (on Feb. 19) of the Year of the Rat (or the mouse, depending on your point of view; the character is the same). Starts Feb. 3. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—The Duke of Devonshire is said to be the richest person in England after the Queen; his drawing collection rivals hers, too. "A Great Heritage," comprising a hundred and three of the best sheets in his cabinet, includes some of the greatest drawings by Leonardo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Rubens. Actually, every work on display here is among the best of its kind. There are two breathtaking red chalk drawings by Annibale Carracci: an awkwardly sprawled youth, nude except for floppy boots, and a half-length study of a hunchbacked boy, with the touching inscription (probably in the artist's hand) "I don't know if God helps me." Van Dyck's watercolor of an English landscape with castle (circa 1632) anticipates the Romantics by more than a century and a half. Through April 21. . . . ¶ Scarcely less fascinating is "The Art of the Brontës," a roomful of drawings, manuscripts, and personal effects from Anne, Charlotte, Emily, and their brother, Branwell. The juvenilia are amazing: twelve-year-old Branwell crammed as many as twenty-five hundred microscopic words onto a page. After seeing his crude, smudgy drawings, it's easier to understand why he couldn't work up the nerve to present himself at the Royal Academy; Anne and Charlotte do better with their portraits and imaginary landscapes. But the most moving objects are the memorabilia: Emily's hair necklace, Anne's collection of seashore pebbles, Charlotte's tiny gloves. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"The Talk of the Town: Rea Irvin of The New Yorker." Irvin (1881-1972) was Harold Ross's first hire, and what a move that was. He created Eustace Tilley, logos and fonts for the headings, the wavy rule, and the misperception that the magazine was a solid venture that had been around for years. Eighty-three covers, drawings, and cartoons are on view, most of them from the artist's personal collection, which he donated to the museum in 1967. Through May 5. . . . ¶ "Uncommon Threads: Three Hundred Years of New York Style," a display of seventy-five complete ensembles. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Growing Up in New York: The Photography of Arthur Leipzig." Black-and-white pictures, from the forties through the sixties, of children's games, East River diving, sit-ins, opening night at the opera, and more. Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM, Boerum Pl. at Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn—"Rails and Shadows: The Last Days of the Third Avenue El." Photographer Ann Shanks rode the last Manhattan El for three months prior to its demolition, in 1955, and produced an evocative, melancholy black-and-white record of the riders, workers, and stations on the line. Through March 24. (Open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 10 to 4; Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

LOREN MADSEN—Sculptures by an artist who works in a variety of mediums toward decidedly various ends. Biomorphic wooden stools drip down to the floor like jellyfish; a bristling steel construction next to them looks like a futuristic reinvention of Apollo's lyre. Some of the works have political undercurrents, such as the three-dimensional wooden blobs based on graphs representing the cost-price index and on something called the Humdef, which is the ratio of the growth in federal spending on human resources to that on defense. We were puzzled. Through Feb. 10. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

ANDRÉ MASSON (1896-1987)—The most tasteful of the Surrealists spent the years 1941-45 as a war exile in New Preston, Connecticut; this small exhibition offers a tantalizing glimpse of the work he produced there. A chimera squaring off with a serpent, wrought in a calligraphic style, has the gravity of literary mythology rather than the visceral impact of a dream. A touching portrait of the artist's son Luis is executed in tempera and sand, with the subject's name scrawled in a great, prideful loop across the image. Through March 2. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St.)

ALICE NEEL (1900-84)—Portraits of pregnant women, spanning more than forty years of the artist's long career, that pulse with the power and pain of childbearing. Ugly blue veins snake across swollen breasts, aching backs curve pitifully, and figures lie isolated on the canvases (except for the odd puddles of pigment that anchor them). The

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candor of these paintings is unrelenting—almost medical—and pitiless. Neel turns pregnancy into a metaphor for the human condition, forcefully demonstrating that the flesh is not only disappointing but humiliating. Through Feb. 3. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Carole Robb—Canvases inspired by the Scottish artist's recent sojourn in Rome: fantastical street scenes and sleeping nudes in radiant tenement interiors. A painting of a man bathing in a public fountain beneath a full moon borders on the romanticism of de Chirico. In other works, quotations from classical sculpture mingle mysteriously with the lost souls of the modern city. Through Feb. 3. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Baziotes, Kamrowski, and Pollock"—A small exhibition neatly pulls together some of the best Surrealist works by three American painters: modest little visions, lacking in the grandiosity and deliberate bizarrerie of their European prototypes but eloquent and charming nonetheless. Pollock's bold geometric abstraction in red, black, and white points the way to his Abstract Expressionist style. A collaboration by all three artists is one of the earliest examples of a drip painting. Through Feb. 24. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St.)

"New York Folk"—Still-lifes, cityscapes, and rural scenes from the thirties and forties by three self-taught artists: Lawrence Lebduska, Abraham Levin, and Israel Litwak. Through March 16. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**Josef Albers**, Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **Richmond Burton**, Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through March 2. . . . **Alexander Calder**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **Joseph Cornell**, C & M, 45 E. 78th St. Through March 2. . . . **Stephen Ellis**, Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Emily Eveleth** and **Elizabeth King**, Stone, 113 E. 90th St. Through March 2. . . . **Dan Graham**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **José María Sicilia**, Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Eve Sonneman**, Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Through Feb. 24.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jane Dickson—"Who Do You Think You Are?," large new paintings, of outstretched and folded arms, on very long swaths of nubby carpet. The artist's sfumato technique and disquieting subject matter appear to good effect in an installation atmosphere. Through Feb. 3. (Black+Herron, 79 Grand St.)

Manny Farber—Colorfully painted pastiches of scattered objects—flowers, leaves, fruit, photographs—that have a pleasing kinetic energy. Through Feb. 17. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Hans-Peter Feldmann—Feldmann plays fast and loose with postmodernist themes—appropriation, commodification, and so on—but he does so with such a light and keenly intelligent hand that he earns considerably more than the benefit of the doubt. For an art-historical riff, he has put together a wall of Old Master images derived from postcards; using color photocopies rather than the actual cards, he creates pictures that are flimsier yet somehow more enticing than the "original" reproductions. Through Feb. 3. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

Lucio Fontana (1899-1968)—Paintings, sculptures, and ceramics from the fifties and sixties by the seminal Italian avant-gardist best known for his slashed monochrome canvases, a stunning selection of which is displayed in the rear gallery. The slashing both mimics the histrionics of Abstract Expressionist gesture and wrecks the integrity of the picture plane; the repercussions of Fontana's innovation continue to influence artists who may not even know his name. Through Feb. 10. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Tom Friedman—Weirdly enchanting art works made from the humblest materials, sometimes scarcely visible: toothpicks, human hair, a wad of bubble gum. The artist has taken a single pill capsule, filled it with infinitesimal balls of Play-Doh, and installed it, resplendently and ridiculously, on a pristine white pedestal. One wall is given over to a galaxy of construction-paper stars, each one individually designed and numbered and delicately pinned to the wall. Through Feb. 17. (Feature, 76 Greene St.)

Ellen Gallagher—Subdued, rather sombre abstractions à la Agnes Martin—or at least that's the initial impression one gets from these works by a young painter who was one of the few genuine surprises at last year's Whitney Biennial. Closer inspection reveals something stranger going on: waves of smiling, thick-lipped mouths, cascades of eyeballs, even the occasional schematic rendering of a woman's head or a forlorn elephant complicate the paintings' sensuous, fussed-over surfaces. Through Feb. 24. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Short List—**Rita Ackermann**, Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Alice Aycock**, Weber, 142 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **Paul de Maranis**, Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **Cathy de Monchaux**, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. Through March 2. . . . **Rochelle Feinstein**, Maynes, 225 Lafayette St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **Stephen Greene**, Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **Larry Johnson** and **Allen Ruppersberg**, Gorney, 100 Greene St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **Forrest Myers**, Art et Industrie, 52 Thompson St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **Bill Schwarz**, Gibson, 568 Broadway. Through Feb. 3. . . . **Alan Turner**, Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 10. . . . **Eugene von Bruenchenhein**, Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Paul Waldman**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Through Feb. 3; **Elyn Zimmerman**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through Feb. 17.

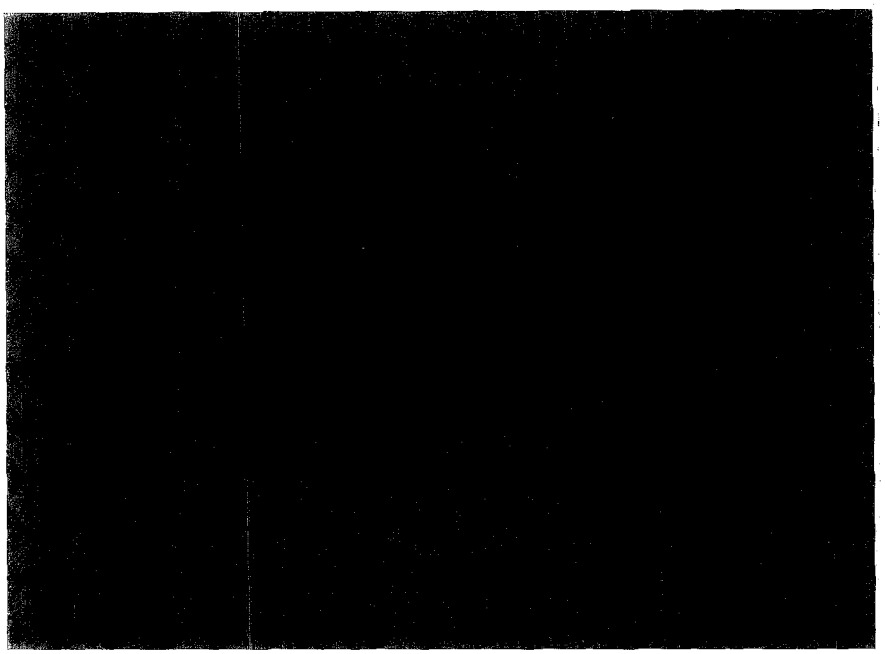
OTHER VENUES

"Six Bridges: The Making of the New York Megalopolis"—The six in question are the George Washington, the Bayonne, the Triborough, the Bronx-Whitestone, the Throgs Neck, and the Verrazano-Narrows; all of them were designed by the preëminent engineer Othmar H. Ammann (who also designed the Lincoln Tunnel and supervised construction of the Golden Gate Bridge). Architectural drawings, maps, photographs, and film clips trace the history of each undertaking. Organized by the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. Through April 19. (PaineWebber Building, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 8 to 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—Feb. 1: Philatelists may vie to acquire such rareties as a newly discovered invert of last year's Richard Nixon stamp (the first United States commemorative invert since the famous Dag Hammarskjöld specimen of 1962) and notable examples of early Newfoundland airmail postage. . . . ¶ Feb. 3: Christie's teams up with Zachys, the wine supermarket, for an auction of more than a thousand lots, which include a notable assortment of aged claret. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Swann's—An auction of autographs, including letters, signed photographs, and inscribed books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Feb. 1 at 10:30.)



"Calligraphy as Living Art," at the China Institute.

Metropolitan Antiques—A show of vintage fashions and antique textiles. (110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. Feb. 2-4.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Lola Alvarez Bravo (1907-93)—Two exhibitions of the pioneering Mexican modernist's work. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 6. Through Feb. 25. . . . ¶ Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through March 9.)

Sally Apfelbaum—Floral closeups in varying scales and focusses, taken in turn-of-the-century gardens in Normandy. Through Feb. 10. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

Larry Clark—Nearly a hundred brightly colored snapshots of skateboarding young toughs in the streets and parks of New York City. Through Feb. 24. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

David Mosconi / "Winter Blind Spots"—"Night Skies," Polaroid triptychs of stars, nebulae, and a solar eclipse. For two of the panels in each triptych, Mosconi has appropriated images from observatories and anonymous nineteenth-century works; for the third, he has fabricated the heavens in the studio, using black cloth, smoke, and powder. Through Feb. 10. / Photographs on the subject of our favorite season, by contributors to *Blind Spot* magazine: Per Bernsten, Vik Muniz, Peter Garfield, Marianne Courville, Abelardo Morrell, and others. Through Feb. 3. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

"1991-1996"—An anniversary exhibition features photographs by Sally Mann, Lynn Davis, Elliott Erwitt, Bill Brandt, Ilse Bing, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Josef Breitenbach, Shikanosuke Yagaki, and others. Through March 9. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Fazal Sheikh: A Sense of Common Ground," portraits of Sudanese,

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Ethiopian, Somalian, Rwandan, and Mozambican refugees. Through March 31. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Eve Arnold: In Retrospect," black-and-white and color images from the photojournalist's forty-year career: politicians, diplomats, movie stars, religious leaders, artists, and musicians. Through Feb. 11. (Another show of Arnold's work is at Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St., through Feb. 10.) . . . ¶ "Country Beside Itself," Lars Tunbjörk's colorful, idiosyncratic exploration of Sweden's changing commercial and leisure pursuits. Through Feb. 11. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—Tom Baril and **Rocky Schenck,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Peter Campus,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **Henri Cartier-Bresson** and **Toshio Shibata,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Jim Goldberg** and **Kiki Smith,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 14. . . . **Michael Johnson,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through March 2. . . . **Michiko Kon,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through March 2. . . . **Erich Lessing** and **France Bourély,** Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through March 6. . . . **Robert Mapplethorpe,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **Sean Mc Devitt,** Arstark, 568 Broadway. Through Feb. 24. . . . **Gilles Peress,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **Neil Winokur,** Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 11.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of the City of New York, and the New York Transit Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Il Barbiere di Siviglia, with Jennifer Larmore, Raúl Giménez, Mark Oswald, John Del Carlo, and Simone Alaimo; conducted by Adam Fischer. (Jan. 31 and Feb. 3 at 8.) . . . **The Makropulos Case,** by Janáček, with Jessye Norman, Graham Clark, Håkan Hagegård, and Donald McIntyre; David Robertson. In English. (Feb. 1 at 8.) . . . **Turandot,** with Ghena Dimitrova, Veronica Villarroel, Michael Sylvester, and Dimitri Kavrakos; Nello Santi. (Feb. 2 at 8.) . . . With Ruth Falcon, Angela Gheorghiu, Mr. Sylvester, and Hao Jiang Tian; Mr. Santi. (Feb. 5 at 8.) . . . **Falstaff,** with Barbara Daniels, Barbara Bonney, Marilyn Horne, Paul Groves, Paul Plishka, and Gino Quilico; James Levine. (Feb. 3 at 1:30.) . . . **Otello,** with Aprile Millo, Plácido Domingo, and James Morris; Mr. Levine. (Feb. 6 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Lorne Munroe, who has served as the Philharmonic's principal cellist for thirty-one years, makes his "solo farewell" in these performances of Schumann's Cello Concerto. (He'll vacate his orchestral chair at the end of the month.) The program also features two of the orchestra's other principal players: violist Cynthia Phelps (in Bartók's Viola Concerto, as completed posthumously by Tibor Serly) and trumpeter Philip Smith (in the Trumpet Concerto, written in 1958, by the French composer Charles Chaynes). Bright Sheng's "Fanfare" and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel" complete the program. Kurt Masur conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Feb. 1 and Feb. 3 at 8 and Feb. 2 at 11 A.M. . . . **Note:** On Feb. 3 at 2, the orchestra plays Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel" in a Young People's Concert conducted by Leslie B. Dunner. . . . **Note, too:** On Feb. 6 at 8, at Alice Tully Hall, the New York Philharmonic presents singer Enrique Morente, guitarists José Fernández "Tomatito" Torres and Juan José "El Paquete" Suarez, and an ensemble in a program of flamenco music and dance, as the opening event of a weeklong Spanish-music festival.)

Concert Royal—James Richman directs Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," Haydn's C-Major Violin Concerto (with Lisa Rautenberg), and Boccherini's Stabat Mater (with soprano Tamara Matthews). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 31 at 8.)

Chanticleer—The men's vocal ensemble offers a program of Gregorian chant. (Temple of Dendur, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949. Feb. 2 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Performing Rossini's Overture to "L'Italiana in Algeri," Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 (featuring Awadagin Pratt), and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 (with soprano Juliana Gondek and bass-baritone Charles Austin). Gerard Schwarz conducts. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 3 at 8 and Feb. 6 at 7:30.)

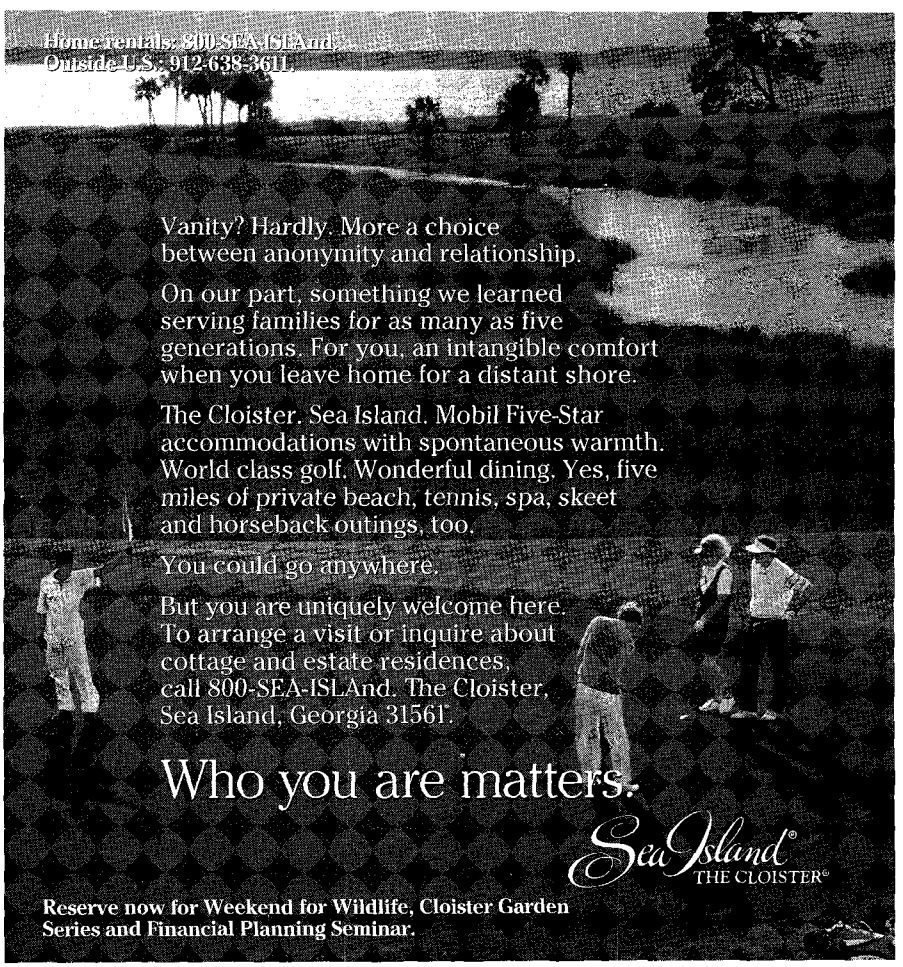
St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall. Feb. 4 at 3: Mariss Jansons conducts Weber's "Euryanthe" Overture, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Emanual Ax), and Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances." . . . ¶ Feb. 5 at 8: Yuri Temirkanov, the orchestra's music director, ascends to the podium for Sergei Slonimsky's "St. Petersburg's Visions," Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 (with Pamela Frank), and Mahler's Symphony No. 1. (247-7800.)

Juilliard Orchestra—When Mahler died, in 1911, three months after conducting his last concert as the New York Philharmonic's music director, he left behind nine masterful symphonies and a very incomplete tenth. The opening movement, an adagio, was substantially finished and is often performed in concert. The remaining four, which the composer left in unorchestrated "short score," were at first considered too fragmentary to serve as the basis for a performance, and his imperious widow discouraged anyone from turning them into a performing score. Despite her objections, musicologists and composers—Ernst Krenek, Alban Berg, and Alexander von Zemlinsky among them—soon began suggesting ways to realize Mahler's general directives. The most widely accepted performing version is the one undertaken by Deryck Cooke (with input from Berthold Goldschmidt) in 1959 and revised by him in 1972. In this performance, James DePreist conducts the orchestra in Cooke's second edition, which has been widely accepted as the standard Mahler Tenth. (Other versions have their champions, too, especially the 1985 edition by Remo Mazzetti, Jr., a recording of which, by Leonard Slatkin and the Saint Louis Symphony, has just been released by BMG Classics.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Feb. 5 at 8.)

RECITALS

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The première of André Previn's Trio for Piano, Oboe, and Bassoon (with the composer at the keyboard) commands special attention on a program that also includes Arthur Foote's "A Night Piece" for flute and strings, Beethoven's Quintet for piano and winds, and Ravel's String Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 31 at 8.)

Miami String Quartet—This year's Music of the Americas series opens with the Florida foursome performing Gershwin's "Lullaby," as well as quartets by Ginastera (his First),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Eduardo Diazmuñoz (his First), and Dvořák (his "American" Quartet in F Major, Op. 90). (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. Jan. 31 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-6075.)

Bargemusic—Presenting sonatas by Mozart and Chopin, as well as Schubert's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major; with violinist Mark Peskanov, cellist Ronald Thomas, and pianist Edward Auer. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Feb. 1 at 7:30 and Feb. 4 at 4.)

Angela Hewitt—The Canadian pianist performs Bach's "Goldberg" Variations, D-Major Partita, and Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 1 at 8.)

ARTEK Chamber Players—Soprano Jessica Tranzillo, violinist Enrico Gatti, and fortepianist Gwendolyn Toth perform songs and instrumental music by Mozart. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Feb. 2-3 at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-0473.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Classics of Russian chamber music share the bill: Prokofiev's "Overture on Hebrew Themes," Shostakovich's Seven Romances for Soprano and Piano Trio (with soprano Barbara Hendricks), and Tchaikovsky's A-Minor Piano Trio. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 2 at 8 and Feb. 4 at 5.)

Michala Petri and Lars Hannibal—The recorder player and lutenist-guitarist perform and discuss Baroque and modern works. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 3 at 7.)

Takacs String Quartet—Offering quartets by Schubert (in A Minor, D. 804), Bright Sheng, and Beethoven (in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 4 at 2.)

Absolute Ensemble—The modern-music group, assisted by the Talujon Percussion Quartet, in works by Gene Pritsker, Lepo Sumera, and Bartók (his "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta"). (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 4 at 2.)

Pomerium—In the mid-sixteenth century, the Flemish port of Antwerp reigned not only as one of Europe's chief commercial hubs but also as an important musical center: such prominent Renaissance composers as Orlando Lassus and Philippe de Monte lived there at least briefly, and others—including Josquin Desprez and Jacobus Clemens non Papa—funnelled compositions through the city's disproportionately numerous music-publishing houses. In this concert, the vocal ensemble, directed by Alexander Blachly, performs sacred and secular polyphonic works, by these and other composers, published in Antwerp between 1545 and 1597. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Feb. 4 at 4.)

Beethoven by the Book—Da Camera of Houston, which this season is investigating links between music and literature, turns the spotlight on compositions by Beethoven and on subsequent works, musical as well as literary, inspired by them. The composer's Quartet in F Major (Op. 135) was his unruffled farewell to the genre he had so thoroughly transformed. A century and a half later, it would play a recurrent role in Milan Kundera's novel "The Unbearable Lightness of Being." His Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major (Op. 47), universally known by its nickname, the "Kreutzer," was to play a role in (and lend its name to) Tolstoy's novella "The Kreutzer Sonata"; and the novella would, in turn, furnish the "plot" for Janáček's String Quartet No. 1 (logically, though oddly, subtitled "The Kreutzer Sonata"). These three compositions will be performed by the Muir String Quartet, violinist Peter Zazofsky, and pianist Sarah Rothenberg; André Gregory and Larry Pine will supply readings from Tolstoy and Kundera. (Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata took its name from the French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer, who visited Vienna in 1798. But he had actually written the piece

The Millrose Games, at Madison Square Garden.

for the mulatto Polish-turned-English wunderkind George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, who premièred it—in 1803, with the composer at the piano—and who was to have been its dedicatee. If Beethoven had stuck to his original intention, would "The Bridgetower Sonata" stand today among the works of Tolstoy and Janáček?) (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Feb. 5 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

Anthony de Mare: Performing contemporary piano compositions by Frederic Rzewski, Bernadette Speach, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 1 at 8.) . . . **dicapo opera theatre:** Presenting "La Bohème," fully staged. (184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. Feb. 1-3 at 8. Through Feb. 11.) . . . **new york pops:** In Viennese light classics, with baritone Hermann Prey. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 2 at 8.) . . . **david deveau:** Pianist, in a program that includes sonatas by Haydn, Schubert, and Scriabin. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 3 at 8.) . . . **eleanor bindman:** Performing harpsichord works by Bach. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Feb. 4 at noon.) . . . **ophrah yerushalmi:** The pianist oversees a recital of poetry-inspired vocal and keyboard music. (La Maison Française, New York University, 16 Washington Mews. Feb. 4 at 3. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 998-8750.) . . . **alban gerhardt:** Cellist, in sonatas by Schnittke, Brahms, Beethoven, and Britten; with pianist Rina Dokshinsky. Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 4 at 4.) . . . **all seasons chamber players:** Performing chamber works by Brahms and Britten, among others. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Feb. 4 at 4. Admission by contribution.) . . . **salon soirées:** Featuring pianist Pamela Goldberg and classical guitarist Tali Roth. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Feb. 4 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **cygnus ensemble:** Presenting recent chamber works, including the premières of compositions by Chester Biscardi, Charles Wuorinen, and William Anderson. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 4 at 8.) . . . **cleveland duo:** Violinist Stephen Warner and violinist and pianist Carolyn Warner offer chamber music. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Feb. 4 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **jupiter symphony:** Jens Nygaard conducts an all-Bach program. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Feb. 5 at 2 and 7 and Feb. 6 at 8. For information, call 799-1259.) . . . **joshua gordon:** Cellist, playing twentieth-century works, including one of his own. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 6 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

One World, Many Races—Many of the best runners skip the indoor track season, especially in an Olympic year. But, judging from the lineup at Friday's Millrose Games, they're making an exception this time around. The American cross-country specialist Brad Schlapak races the Moroccan Khalid Kairouani, the Briton Andy Keith, and the Kenyans Martin Keino and Eliud Barngetuny in the three-thousand metres; the strong Canadian sprinters Donovan Bailey and Bruny Surin try to extend their recent string of victories against the American Henry Neal; and the Irishman Marcus O'Sullivan fights the pack—including Americans Paul McMullen and Erik Nedeau—in the fast, tight turns of the Garden's Wanamaker Mile. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Feb. 2 at 6.)

One Night Only—Asked about "Thirty-one Ejaculations," his latest work in progress, the monologuist Eric Bogosian chuckles. "In the Catholic Church, they have these things called ejaculations—these mini prayers. And sometimes you have to say them as penance." The other influences he cites—Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and their fellow-Beats—have established a tone at St. Mark's that he intends to honor in his Poetry Project reading there on Wednesday. "I'm doing this piece that dwells in the absolute core of sex for however long it takes to read the whole thing. It's an extended meditation on the absurdity of sex itself, this bizarre thing that people get very upset and wound up about but which, from another perspective, is about as interesting as the reflex action of your esophagus." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Jan. 31 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

How to Make an African-American Quilt—To kick off African-American History Month, quilters Valerie Jean Bailey, Trannie Mae Cooper, and Virginia Hall work on their latest creations and talk about handing down their art. Ms. Hall, who started a quilting circle in Bedford-Stuyvesant, credits her mother for her skills: "I walked in my mother's tracks all day. She would have a quilting bee, and it was like a celebration—they'd be talking about anything but the quilt. As a small child, it was such a warm feeling to be playing underneath that quilt. I'd stay there and make it my house." (Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. Feb. 4 at 2. No charge beyond museum admission.)

Readings—Jan. 31 at 6:30: Selected Shorts opens its twelfth season with Joseph Wiseman reading "Gimpel the Fool," by Isaac Bashevis Singer; Frances Sternhagen reading "Ghirlandaio," by Francine Prose; and John Benjamin Hickey reading "Orientation," by Daniel Orozco. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ Feb. 5 at 8: Belletrists William Gass, Cynthia Ozick, and Richard Howard read a selection of short stories by Henry James. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Feb. 6 at 6: Joseph Mitchell reads from his book "Joe Gould's Secret." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Feb. 1 at 6:30: Landscape painter Wolf Kahn (who recently submitted a proposal to repaint Harlem River bridges in the Fauvist palette he favors) discourages the competition in a talk titled "Six Reasons Not to Paint a Landscape Painting." (New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 7: Directors Spike Lee ("Clockers") and Kevin Smith ("Clerks") join John Pierson, the dealmaker who helped launch their careers, in a discussion of the trials of independent filmmaking. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 3 at 1: For a family workshop at the China Institute, Sunny Zeng stretches dough into the elongated noodles (for long life) traditionally served on Chinese New Year. (125 E. 65th St. 744-8181, ext. 143.)

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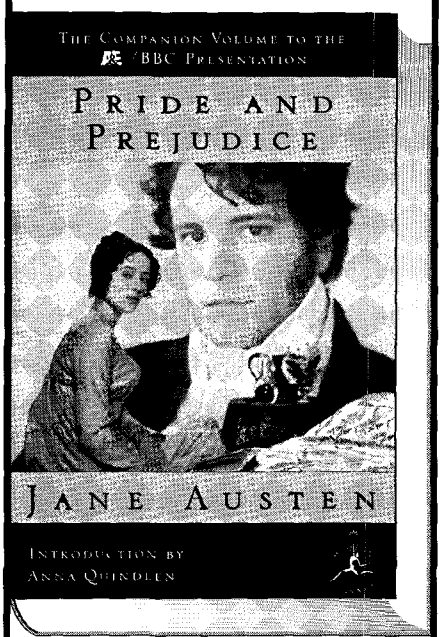

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

ANTONIA'S LINE—In a drama written and directed by Marleen Gooris, a Dutch mother (Willeke van Ammerlrooy) heads an unconventional household during the years following the Second World War. In Dutch. Opening February 2. (Angelika Film Center.)

BLACK SHEEP—Chris Farley stars as the ne'er-do-well brother of a politician (Tim Matheson), in a comedy written by Fred Wolf and directed by Penelope Spheeris. Opening February 2. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, East 85th Street, and Astor Plaza.)

EGON SCHIELE: EXCESS AND PUNISHMENT—Herbert Vesely's film features Mathieu Carrière as the Austrian Expressionist who died in 1918 at the age of twenty-eight. With Jane Birkin, Christine Kaufmann, and Marcel Ophuls. In German. Opening January 31. (Film Forum.)

THE JUROR—Demi Moore and Alec Baldwin star in a thriller about the trial of a mobster. Directed by Brian Gibson. Written by Ted Tally, from the 1995 novel by George Dawes Green. Opening February 2. (Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

VUKOVAR—A Croat (Mirjana Jokovic) marries a Serb (Boris Isakovic) in Boro Draskovic's drama, which is set in the former Yugoslavia, where it was filmed. Co-written by the director and Maja Draskovic. In Serbo-Croatian. Opening February 2. (Quad Cinema.)

WHITE SQUALL—Jeff Bridges stars in Ridley Scott's story of an ill-fated sailboat trip. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening February 2. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 3.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 20.)

ANGELS & INSECTS—This film, based on an A. S. Byatt neo-Victorian novella, is flatly directed by Philip Haas, but at least the performances are handsomely framed. Patsy Kensit plays an aristocrat who lives on her looks (under the veil of her canopied bed, her skin glows with golden avarice), Kristin Scott Thomas a poor relation who cultivates her hobbies (she tends an ant farm); they share an interest in the same man, a naturalist played by Mark Rylance. Acting-wise, it's no contest: Scott Thomas turns in a beautiful portrait of poise, yearning, and sublimation. The sexy intrigue at the country estate is interspersed with so much insect footage that it becomes tough to tell the men from the moths. The movie is being released unrated because it offers a glimpse of an actor's dangly bits, which seem to be doing more than dangling.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Village East Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BED OF ROSES—Mary Stuart Masterson and Christian Slater star in a romantic comedy about a New York City investment banker and her secret admirer. Written and directed by Michael Goldenberg. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

BIG BULLY—A successful novelist (Rick Moranis) who returns to his home town with his son to teach a high-school writing class discovers that the shop teacher (Tom Arnold) is his childhood nemesis. With Don Knotts. Directed by Steve Miner. Written by Mark Steven Johnson. (Village Theatre VII, Gemini, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through Feb. 1.)

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN—Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's nightmarish adult fantasy deserves a place beside such phantasmagorical film wonders as "Metropolis" and "Batman," but (like "Metropolis") it's a cold piece of work. The succession of dazzling images grows tiresome as the plot—about a man who steals the dreams of children—wanders aimlessly. The enterprise has a strongly Dickensian feel, complete with orphans on cobblestone streets, but it's as though the filmmakers had mined "Oliver Twist" for the set design and forgotten to tell the story.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

DEAD MAN WALKING—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit.—T.R. (1/8/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

FRENCH TWIST—A sunlit French farce written and directed by Josiane Balasko, who also enjoys herself no end in the role of Marijo, a chunky, cheerful lesbian who wanders into the marriage of Loli (Victoria Abril) and Laurent (Alain Chabat) and churns it into a froth. Abril's trademark laugh pretty well sums up the picture's gusto, but the fun doesn't last: the story settles down, the characters call an uneasy truce, and Balasko even starts to moralize on the folly of love gone wrong. In French.—A.L. (1/15/96) (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN—An action film written by Quentin Tarantino, in which he and George Clooney play a pair of thieves who find themselves in a Mexican saloon full of vampires. With Harvey Keitel and Juliette Lewis. Directed by Robert Rodriguez. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; through Feb. 1.)

GET SHORTY—John Travolta plays Chili Palmer, a small-time Miami loan shark who winds up in Hollywood, where he discovers his true métier and fulfills his destiny: he becomes a movie producer. Scott Frank's screenplay is based on an Elmore Leonard novel. The director, Barry Sonnenfeld, doesn't have the dexterity to trap the story's tiny, quick ironies;

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he works too strenuously for laughs. But Travolta's no-sweat acting—which deftly captures the dry comic tone of Leonard's prose—keeps the movie watchable. Also with Rene Russo, Gene Hackman, Danny DeVito, Delroy Lindo, and Dennis Farina.—T.R. (10/23/95) (59th Street East Cinema and 62nd & Broadway. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Feb. 1.)

Heat—Michael Mann, the moving spirit behind "Miami Vice," turns his attention to Los Angeles, where an anguished cop (Al Pacino) goes head to head with a troubled villain (Robert De Niro). The film, which runs on and on for nearly three hours, yearns to be much more than a thriller—it wants to diagnose the sickness of men's souls and convey the nobility of their pain. The taciturn De Niro and the braying Pacino share a flawless scene over a cup of coffee, but the real honors go to Val Kilmer and Ashley Judd as a warring, loving couple.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Aida Mohammadkhani in "The White Balloon."

Jumanji—The title refers to an ancient board game with groovy powers; Robin Williams plays Alan, who was sucked into the Jumanji board as a boy and emerges twenty-six years later when a couple of kids (Kirsten Dunst and Bradley Pierce) open up the game and roll the dice. Cue all manner of special effects: spiders the size of hubcaps, elephants in the hallway. There's a touch of Spielberg in the way the director, Joe Johnston, makes these images work dramatically. The movie takes time to warm up, it weakens into soppiness at the end, and the game itself, if you think it through, makes very little sense. Most of the time, however, you don't have to think at all.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Last Summer in the Hamptons—A comedy in which Victoria Foyt plays a movie star who visits a Long Island theatrical family that is in the midst of producing a play. Directed by Henry Jaglom, who co-wrote the screenplay with Foyt. (Cinema Village, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Angelika 57.)

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kindhearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Mr. Holland's Opus—A film for the entire family, if you have no place else to leave them. Richard Dreyfuss speaks gruffly and carries a little baton as Glenn Holland, a musician who aspires to be a serious composer but finds his true calling as a high-school teacher. His students include Alicia Witt, whose clarinet squeaks, and Jean Louisa Kelly, who belts out a Gershwin tune until it slumps to the floor. Dreyfuss builds up a head of steam and ages persuasively (he looks like Ed Asner by the time Mr. Holland reaches retirement), but the movie is shameless in its efforts to extract tears from the audience, and Dreyfuss himself does his signature "choke": gulping, beating back tears with rapid eye blinks, then snapping a brave smile. Glenne Headly co-stars as Holland's chipmunk wife; Jay Thomas enjoys blowing his whistle as a coach.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

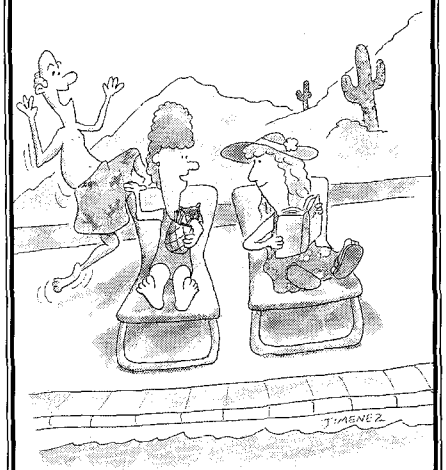
Nico Icon—German director Susanne Ofteringer's film—moody, melancholy, and technically extraordinary—documents the life of the Velvet Underground's chanteuse, Nico, from her beginnings as a model to her death, in 1988, as a pallid junkie. Throughout the movie, Nico's music plays practically non-stop: enigmatic dirges of longing and bitterness torn from a soul drugged to numbness by her successive environments (post-war Germany, Warhol's Factory, life on the road).—B.D. (Film Forum.)

Nixon—Oliver Stone's three-hours-plus biography of Tricky Dick (Anthony Hopkins) is, like its subject, awkward, sweaty, tenacious, and highly impeachable. As usual, the filmmaker has big ideas about the forces that have shaped recent American history: this Nixon is the helpless, sporadically conscience-stricken pawn of a sinister right-wing cabal that was responsible for Vietnam and, of course, the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Where does Stone find this stuff—in pumpkin patches? You could shell out seven or eight bucks at the multiplex and accept Stone's frivolous speculations as solemn truth. But it would be wrong. Also with Joan Allen (as Pat Nixon), James Woods (as H. R. Haldeman), and David Hyde Pierce (as John Dean).—T.R. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square.)

Once Upon a Time . . . When We Were Colored—Tim Reid's adaptation of the 1989 book by Clifton Taulbert, about growing up in Mis-

EUZA GRAN

Have a lovely Easter



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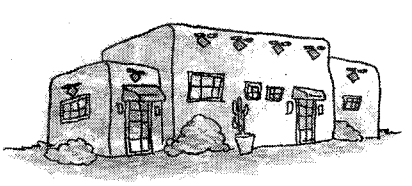

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sissippi in the forties and fifties, stars Al Freeman, Jr., Phylicia Rashad, and Leon. Written by Paul W. Cooper. (Manhattan Twin.)

OTHELLO—Oliver Parker's version of Shakespeare's tragedy—the first filmed "Othello" in which the Moor of Venice is played by a black actor (Laurence Fishburne)—follows the familiar-quotations principle of Shakespearean adaptation. By sacrificing the volcanic flow of language that conveys Othello's pride, confusion, and anguish, the movie leaves Fishburne stranded: his performance is mysteriously uncharismatic. Kenneth Branagh, who plays Iago, has a surer grasp of Shakespearean technique, and his bold, confident interpretation manages to cut through the muddle that Parker has made of the play. Who steals this picture, though, steals trash. With Irene Jacob as Desdemona.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Paris.)

RESTORATION—Michael Hoffman's film starts in the year 1660 and follows a young doctor named Merivel (Robert Downey, Jr.) through his epicurean excesses at the court of Charles II, his purgative sojourn among the Quakers, his selfless struggle against the plague, and his own restoration to royal favor. The sets and costumes are a dream, but the performers—Sam Neill as the ineffectual king, Meg Ryan as an Irish madwoman, and Hugh Grant as a foppish painter—are given no room to breathe; only David Thewlis, playing Merivel's Quaker colleague, delivers any real pathos. Adapted by Rupert Walters from Rose Tremain's novel.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center and 68th St. Playhouse.)

RICHARD III—This fancy production—directed by Richard Loncraine, from a stage version by Richard Eyre—transports the scheming nobles of fifteenth-century England to the nineteen-thirties and dresses the villainous protagonist (Ian McKellen) in a Fascist's black shirt. The notion that Richard is a vicious thug isn't exactly a fresh insight, and the obtrusive ingenuity of the theatrical concept gives the whole spectacle a preening, self-infatuated quality—an inexpressive veneer of chic. McKellen's banality-of-evil portrayal of Richard is disappointing. The play is basically a rip-roaring melodrama with a magnetic, appallingly vital bad guy; what Loncraine and McKellen give us—a thin conceit about a dull, efficient, affectless sort of monster—is a poor substitute. Among the supporting players, Nigel Hawthorne (as Clarence), Jim Broadbent (as Buckingham), and Maggie Smith (as the Duchess of York) acquit themselves honorably; Annette Bening (as Queen Elizabeth) does not.—T.R. (1/22/96) (Village East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

SCREAMERS—A melancholy sci-fi thriller, set in 2078, that starts with an intriguing premise (selfish earthlings greedy for fuel have sold out the last remaining human pioneers on a faraway mining planet) but pretty quickly runs over a cliff. Peter Weller plays a stoic commander who tries to stop a war and bring everyone still standing back home; his main obstacles are Screamers, little killing devices originally trained to protect people but which now attempt to kill everyone in sight. The Screamers are creepy—they burrow underground like moles, and apparently they procreate—but not quite satisfying as a source of evil: you never find out how they got so clever or whether they've developed souls. With Jennifer Rubin and Andy Lauer. Adapted by Dan O'Bannon and Miguel Tejada-Flores from a story by Philip K. Dick. Directed by Christian Duguay.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow-actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

TOY STORY—A team effort by the computer-animation company Pixar and Disney. The easy-to-follow screenplay, about the rivalry between two toys—cowboy Woody and spaceman Buzz Lightyear—should excite young children; teen-agers and parents can enjoy the brilliantly executed action sequences. The filmmakers have gotten around the coldness of so much computer animation by using the warm and friendly voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. Yes, it's a come-on for Disney products, but all their children's films are about marketing; at least this one—unlike "Pocahontas"—has some zip.—B.D. (23rd St. West Triplex, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

12 MONKEYS—Terry Gilliam's elaborate time-travel thriller is based on Chris Marker's elegant twenty-nine-minute short, "La Jetée" (1964). Turning that perfect, rigorously constructed fable about memory and mortality into a big-budget futuristic action picture starring Bruce Willis is an inherently quixotic project, but the screenwriters, David and Janet Peoples, do a surprisingly skillful job: the complicated plot they've worked out has its own logic and integrity, and it even preserves, like insects fossilized in amber, a few poignant traces of Marker's metaphysical lyricism. Unfortunately, Gilliam's hyperkinetic direction keeps subverting the story's meaning. Instead of respecting the reflective nature of the material, he bombards us with bizarre sensation; in this picture, memory has the false immediacy of an acid flashback. Willis and his co-star, Madeleine Stowe, give alert, thoughtful performances. But finally the film is no more than a flamboyant curiosity, replacing the spooky obsessiveness of "La Jetée" with a much tamer kind of weirdness. Also with Brad Pitt, in a showy role as a voluble lunatic; he's dreadful.—T.R. (1/22/96) (34th St. East, Beekman, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

WAITING TO EXHALE—Pure tripe. In the film version of Terry McMillan's best-selling novel, four friends (Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, and Lela Rochon) spend their lives in bonding and mutual counselling; their approach to men swivels between sharklike aggression and Bambi-eyed yearning. The director, Forest Whitaker, appears to be at the mercy of this confusion, switching tones in the middle of scenes and drawing cartoon reactions from his performers. The soundtrack is everything the picture isn't: sultry, creamy, and quick about its business.—A.L. (1/15/96) (Sutton, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

THE WHITE BALLOON—Jafar Panahi's drama follows the adventures of a seven-year-old girl (Aida Mohammadkhani) at the market in Tehran. In Persian. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** (reviewed in our issue of 11/20/95): Baronet. . . . **ANGELA:** Quad Cinema. . . . **BABE** (9/4/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BALTO:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CASINO** (12/4/95): Manhattan Twin and National Twin. . . . **THE CROSSING GUARD:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DON'T BE A MENACE TO SOUTH CENTRAL WHILE DRINKING YOUR JUICE IN THE HOOD:** Village East Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Embassy 3, and Embassy 4. . . . **DUNSTON CHECKS IN:** Lincoln Square. . . . **EYE FOR AN EYE:** 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza. . . . **FATHER OF THE BRIDE PART II:** Sutton. . . . **FOUR ROOMS:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **GEORGIA** (12/11/95): Angelika Film Center. . . . **GOLDENEYE** (11/27/95): Criterion Center. . . . **KICKING AND SCREAMING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LAMERICA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Village Theatre VII. . . . **LIVING IN OBLIVION:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Quad Cinema and Cinema 3. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Eastside Playhouse and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **SABRINA** (12/25/95-1/1/96): Tower East and Lincoln Square. . . . **SEVEN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE SEXUAL LIFE OF THE BELGIANS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **SHANGHAI TRIAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THINGS TO DO IN DENVER WHEN YOU'RE DEAD:** Embassy 2. . . . **TO DIE FOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TWO IF BY SEA:** Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center. . . . **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): Worldwide Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
SUTTON 1 AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
MANHATTAN TWIN, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
BARONET AND CORONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CINEMA I, CINEMA II, AND CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GEMINI 1 AND 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 68th St.
TOWER EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
WAVERLY 1 AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St.
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
OLYMPIA 1 AND II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EMBASSY 1, Broadway at 46th St.
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
NATIONAL TWIN, Broadway at 44th St.

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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Béatrice (1988)—Bertrand Tavernier's drama about incest in the Middle Ages must have been intended as a harshly realistic look at the barbarism of the times—there's no other explanation for its flat, dogged style. But the director's "realism" is selective. What should be the film's most shocking scene—the rape of Béatrice (Julie Delpy) by her father, the brutal knight François de Cortemare (Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu)—is softened by dim lighting and discreet cuts, while a scene in which the pregnant Béatrice persuades her brother to kick her repeatedly in the stomach is rendered in stark daylight and seems to last forever. The director's treatment makes the girl's attempted abortion far uglier than the rape; but there's no telling, in this sluggish, confused movie, whether this is a deliberate effect or the unfortunate result of careless filmmaking. In French.—T.R. (Florence Gould Hall; Feb. 6.)

Brightness (1987)—This acclaimed film from Mali has an incandescent look but a disappointingly simple story about a young man's attempt to master *komo*—the Bambara culture's divine, magical wisdom—against the wishes of his malicious father. The movie becomes a series of supernatural set pieces, including the conflagration of an albino, a chicken, and a dog; thanks be to the Sacred Vulture that we only see the fowl burned alive. Directed by Souleymane Cissé. In Bambara.—M.S. (Symphony Space; Feb. 6.)

The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954)—The amusingly slimy monster—a sort of rubbery, leering frog that stands upright, like a man—has obscene intentions toward the fainting heroine (Julia Adams). This low-grade horror film from Universal came out in 3-D, and kids seemed to adore the amphibious villain. (There were two sequels.) Jack Arnold directed.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 3-4.)

The Dybbuk (1937)—A loving expansion of Sh. An-ski's play—one of the glories of the Yiddish theatre—about a vow between friends that results in the demonic transformation of their children. The picture is poignant, and sometimes mesmerizing, even when it's stilted and laborious; it pulls you into worlds within worlds. An-ski (the pseudonym of Schloyme Zanvl Rappaport) wrote the play around the time of the First World War, after returning from a folklore-gathering mission in Ukraine. Its Polish-Jewish adapters—Michal Waszynski, the director, and Alter Kacyzne and Mark Arnshteyn, the screenwriters—share the same sense of mission. Waszynski pulls off a daring Expressionist episode: a bride's prenuptial dance with Death. The filmmakers' best stroke, though, is simply opening up An-ski's work—not just as a way of satisfying a movie's larger scenic capacity but as an act of cultural and religious preservation. The entire film is a haunted artifact, wrested from the rubble of an annihilated civilization. In Yiddish.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 4.)

The Iceman Cometh (1973)—Eugene O'Neill's great, heavy, simplistic, mechanical, beautiful play, in a straightforward, faithful production in handsome, dark-toned color. The play is essentially an argument between Larry, an aging anarchist (Robert Ryan), and Hickey (Lee Marvin); Larry speaks for pity and the necessity of illusions, Hickey for the curative power of truth. Larry, a self-hating alcoholic, is a weak man and a windbag, but Ryan brings so much understanding to Larry's weakness that the play achieves new dimensions. Ryan (who died shortly after) got right to the boozy, gnarled soul of the play. He becomes O'Neill for us; he has O'Neill's famous "tragic handsomeness" and the broken-man jowls, too, and at the end, when Larry is permanently "iced"—that is, stripped of illusion—we can see that this is the author's fantasy of himself: he alone is above the illusions that the others fall back on. The film is marred by the central miscasting of Lee Marvin, but it isn't destroyed. Though the characters are devised for a thesis and we never lose our awareness of that, they are nevertheless marvellously playable. Fredric March interprets Harry Hope with so much quiet tenderness that when Harry regains his illusions and we see March's muscles tone up we don't know whether to smile for the character or the actor. Directed by John Frankenheimer—tactfully but not very probingly.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 3.)

The Sacrifice (1986)—Andrei Tarkovsky's hundred-and-forty-five-minute parable about humanity's fate stars Erland Josephson as Alexander, a former actor whose actions may determine the planet's destiny during a nuclear cataclysm. As a small group of friends, servants, and family gather to celebrate Alexander's birthday (which turns out to coincide with doomsday), bits of suppressed emotion are made suddenly vivid the way they are in Ingmar Bergman movies. But most of the time Tarkovsky operates like a guru with Biblical retribution up his sleeve, exploiting the elegant isolation of Alexander's waterfront estate first for lulling, then for apocalyptic pictorial and aural effects. The movie lacks the cohesiveness and charge of genuine nightmare; Tarkovsky's jeremiads against the materialism, violence, and aimlessness of modern civilization turn into white noise. The real dreamer here is the cinematographer, Sven Nykvist, who catches moonbeams with his lens and provides an illusion, at least, of clarity. With Susan Fleetwood. In Swedish.—M.S. (Symphony Space; Feb. 6.)

At the Walter Reade Theatre, a selection of films by Andrzej Wajda and other Polish filmmakers.

Sparkle (1976)—As Sister, the hell-bent lead singer of a trio (made up of the three daughters of a domestic servant), the young singer-actress Lonette McKee has the sexual brazenness that stars such as Susan Hayward and Ava Gardner had in their youth. She's terrific, but she has barely had a taste of singing in public when she falls for a sadistic pusher who degrades her. She goes downhill unbelievably fast, and the picture loses its zing when the action shifts to the rise of her docile and dewy-eyed little sister, Sparkle (Irene Cara), who is guided by a hardworking, dimply manager (Philip Michael Thomas). The director, Sam O'Steen, keeps the movie full of atmospheric detail; the crowded look of the film helps to compensate for the skeletonic Joel Schumacher script, which seems heavily indebted to the story of the Supremes. The songs are by Curtis Mayfield.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; Feb. 4.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Films starring Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.; most are silent. Jan. 31: "Manhattan Madness" (1916, Allan Dwan) and "His Picture in the Papers" (1916, John Emerson).... Feb. 1: "Reaching for the Moon" (1917, Emerson) and "Reaching for the Moon" (1930, Edmund Goulding).... Feb. 2-3: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1924, Raoul Walsh) and "Mystery of the Leaping Fish" (1916, Emerson).... Feb. 4-5: "The Gaucho" (1928, F. Richard Jones) and "The Taming of the Shrew" (1929, Samuel Taylor).... Feb. 6: "Down to Earth" (1917, Emerson), "Flirting with Fate" (1916, Christy Cabanne), and "The Habit of Happiness" (1916, Dwan).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Films directed by John Frankenheimer. Feb. 1 at 2:30: "I Walk the Line" (1970).... Feb. 1 at 6: "The Gypsy Moths" (1969).... Feb. 1 at 8:15 and Feb. 2 at 6: "The Horsemen" (1971).... Feb. 2 at 2:30 and Feb. 4 at 5: "French Connection II" (1975).... Feb. 2 at 8:15: "Story of a Love Story" (1973).... Feb. 3 at 2: "The Iceman Cometh" (†).... Feb. 4 at 2 and Feb. 5 at 2:30: "Black Sunday" (1977).... Feb. 5 at 6 and Feb. 6 at 2:30: "52 Pick-Up" (1986).... ¶ Feb. 1 at 3 and 6: "Former East/Former West" (1994, Shelly Silver).... ¶ Feb. 2-6: Silent films starring Asta Nielsen. With non-English intertitles and live English voice-overs.... ¶ Feb. 5 at 6:30: Short films by Vivienne Dick, who will be present.... ¶ Feb. 6 at 6: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Polish cinema, from 1930 to the present; all films in Polish, with English subtitles. Jan. 31 at 2: "Ashes and Diamonds" (1958, Andrzej Wajda).... Jan. 31 at 4: "Kanal" (1957, Wajda).... Feb. 1 at 2 and 6:30: "Border Street" (1948, Aleksander Ford).... Feb. 1 at 4:10 and Feb. 4 at 6:30: "The Last Stage" (1948, Wanda Jakubowska).... Feb. 2 at 2 and 6:15: "The Treasure" (1949, Leonard Buczkowski).... Feb. 2 at 4:10 and 8:30: "The Hours of Hope" (1955, Jan Rybkowski).... Feb. 3 at 4 and 7:30: "Night Train" (1959, Jerzy Kawalerowicz).... Feb. 3 at 6 and 9:30: "The Last Day of Summer" (1958, Tadeusz Konwicki and Jan Laskowski).... Feb. 4 at 4 and 8:45: "The Dybbuk" (†).... Feb. 6 at 2: "Landscape of Battle" (1970, Wajda).... Feb. 6 at 4: "Everything for Sale" (1969, Wajda).... ¶ Weekend showings for children. Feb. 3-4 at 2: "The Creature from the Black Lagoon" (†).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Feb. 4 at 7, the feature will be "Sparkle" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Feb. 6 at 7: "Brightness" (†).... Feb. 6 at 9: "The Sacrifice" (†).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Feb. 6 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Béatrice" (†).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-65." Jan. 31 at 1:30 and Feb. 1 at 2:30: "Greenwich Village Story" (1961, Jack O'Connell).... Feb. 2-4 at 1:30: "Gang of Souls" (1989, Maria Beatty) and three short films by Nam June Paik, Shigeko Kubotam, and Laki Vazakis.... ¶ Films by and about Robert Frank. Jan. 31 at 4, Feb. 1 at 6:15, and Feb. 2-4 at 4: "Fire in the East: A Portrait of Robert Frank" (1986, Philip Brookman) and "C'est Vrai! (One Hour)" (1990).

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

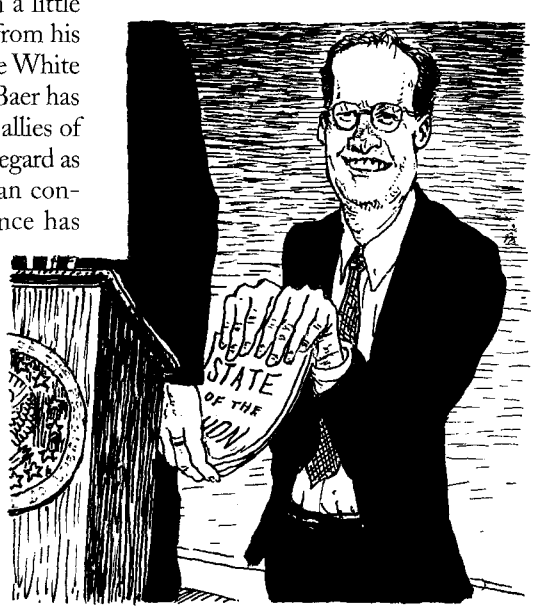
CLINTON'S BAER HUG

THE morning after Bill Clinton's State of the Union address, Don Baer, a forty-one-year-old North Carolinian with thinning brown hair and a thick streak of paranoia about seeing his name in print, sounded almost serene. Reaction to the speech had been largely positive, especially in the media, and Baer, who is Clinton's communications director and served previously as his chief speechwriter, was relishing the soft rain of compliments. "It established the President definitively as the centrist he is and always has been," Baer said of the speech, with evident satisfaction.

For Baer, the praise for this year's State of the Union must have made a welcome contrast with the response to last year's, which had established the President definitively as nothing except prolix. In fact, the praise must have been welcome in general, for during the past year Baer has been the target of more than a little sniping—not from the press but from his peers in the Administration. In the White House's bitterest palace intrigue, Baer has emerged as one of the few inside allies of the outside adviser many officials regard as the Devil himself: the Republican consultant Dick Morris. The alliance has helped Baer's career; it has also helped make him a classically Clintonian figure of controversy. That is, the personal and political attacks on him are virtually impossible to tell apart.

It all started last spring, when the White House flew into a fit—a fit that has yet to pass entirely—at the revelation that Clinton had been conferring privately with Morris, the guru who has held a special fascination for the President for many years. In the months that followed, Baer, who had noticed mysterious, last-minute changes in speeches as far back as December of 1994, began working closely (and quietly) with Morris, to the point of inserting chunks of the consultant's preferred language into the President's texts.

As Morris's role became increasingly public, so did his relationship with Baer. By summer's end, it was an open secret that Morris was among those who were lobbying hard to see that the moderate Baer, and not the more liberal Ann Lewis, who was backed strongly by Hillary Rodham Clinton, would land the job of running Clinton's communications shop. In the end, Baer won out (Lewis was given a high-profile position with Clinton's reëlection committee) and began lobbying for another White House aide, Michael Waldman, to succeed him in his old job. In December, after months of delay and a round of counter-lobbying by several high-ranking minority officials on behalf of a Hispanic speechwriter, Waldman was named the new director of speechwriting.



Don Baer

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

TO Baer's many, mainly liberal, critics, his attachment to Morris proves him to be what they always suspected—an unprincipled opportunist. An ex-speechwriter says, "He learned from the best, David Gergen"—who was Baer's boss when both men worked at *U.S. News*—"but he truly puts Gergen to shame." Baer's defenders, and there are some, admit that he can be overbearing; but they also point out that Baer himself did not campaign for his new job, that his politics actually are in synch with Morris's, and that his relationship with Morris would never have started if Clinton hadn't wanted it to. "The reason the President and the Vice-President brought Morris in was to help them take back control of their own government," a White House aide says. "Don's helping them do that."

Whether or not that is true, one thing nobody disputes is that in the past six months or so the speechwriting operation, which is staffed almost completely with Baer people, and over which he still exerts some control as an editor, has been in fine form. The affirmative-action speech in July; the "common ground" speeches on civility and religion around the same time; the race-relations speech in Texas on the day of the Million Man March; and now the State of the Union—all were solid-to-stellar pieces of work.

The over-all message machine has also been humming along. The other day, at a conference of futuristic Republicans, the pollster Frank Luntz echoed a complaint heard often in his party these days. "The President is winning the communications battle," Luntz said. "We talk about O.M.B.

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and C.B.O. and C.P.I. He talks about values, and it's working. We're getting clobbered." As long as that remains true, Baer will remain liked—perhaps even well liked—in the only White House office that matters.

TO THE DOGS

LIKE a gardener reading a seed catalogue and finding herself transported to spring, DeTroy Kistner considers the leafless sward that is now Central Park and sees a hedge-lined serpentine fence bisecting a verdant Sheep Meadow. In that vision, half the meadow is reserved for humans. The other half is for humans fortunate enough to be in the company of dogs.

Kistner, the companion of a young German shepherd named Sailor, got the idea for the Dog Meadow last summer. "It's six in the morning, and you're in the Park throwing a ball to your dog, and suddenly there's a ranger ready to write you up for the terrible crime of letting your dog off his leash," she recalls. "And I thought, There's a facility in the Park for everyone else—why not dogs?"

Other dog owners cheered her on, and so Kistner, a real-estate broker and a residential space planner with no history of civic activism, formed the Urban Canine Conservancy. In a month, she wrote a fifty-page proposal for the Dog Meadow. It is a model of research ("Sheep, the meadow's prior inhabitants . . . are far heavier than any dog and have hard hooves, and their urine is much stronger") and imagination (one outer wall would have small openings so dog owners could slip plastic bags of droppings into bins outside the Meadow).

Early in November, Kistner hand-delivered the proposal to the Central Park Conservancy, the Parks Commissioner, the Police Commissioner, and the Mayor. Police Commissioner William Bratton, a dog owner and Park walker, sent a warm reply—which may be seen as yet another nip at the cuffs of Mayor Giuliani, whose office blew Kistner off with a form letter. Not shrewd of City Hall—Kistner is decidedly not a crank. Indeed, among her supporters are Carolina Herrera and Mort and Linda Janklow.

When Kistner, from her perch in a midtown penthouse that was once occupied by Tennessee Williams, says, "This is the last month we'll ask nicely," you know she has Plan B in the wings. "We'll use the Internet to urge people to boycott companies that donate to the Conservancy," she says. "I like problem-solving, I like pleasing both sides. That's why I'm asking for only *half* the Sheep Meadow."

Kistner might as well ask for all of it, considering the opposition from Parks Commissioner Henry Stern. "The proposal is grandiose and overblown," he says, "but I would like to explore with this group and others where a half-acre site might go in Central Park. If we can agree, and if it can be self-sustaining, we'll talk to the Conservancy."

Karen Putnam, the administrator of Central Park and the president of the Conservancy, is equally unlikely to give Kistner what she wants. "Anyone who's ever been to the Sheep Meadow in summer knows it's packed," she says. "This plan would call for the relocation of a large number of people. Ninety-eight per cent of the Park is available to dog walkers, and the Sheep Meadow is the *only* part reserved for passive recreation for people."

To DeTroy Kistner, these responses mean that at best she'll win a dog run or two. "Small is *not* beautiful—the proposal I wrote *is* my fallback position," she insists, so sternly that some city officials may soon wish that she could be sent away, far from Central Park, for obedience training.

JURY TAMPERING

THERE'S a new hot-button issue in the American legal community these days: computerized juries. An artificial-intelligence expert named Dr. Joseph Bonuso recently announced that he and his colleagues at New York University Law School had successfully completed work on the Solomon Project—a computer program that, using "voice-stress analysis" of courtroom testimony and a process called "fuzzy logic," arrives at trial verdicts. When Dr. Bonuso made public the results of the program's verdicts in some notorious cases—it acquitted Mike Tyson and convicted Claus von Bülow, the Menendez brothers, William Kennedy Smith, and O. J. Simpson—he was roundly denounced by attorneys and judges, embraced by talk-radio hosts, and enthusiastically covered by mainstream media outlets like the San Francisco *Chronicle*, the *American Lawyer*, and CNN. But, before you tear up your most recent call to jury duty, take heed: the Solomon Project is a hoax—another score for the performance artist and media prankster Joey Skaggs.

Skaggs, whose past scams include Portofess (a portable confession booth) and the Fat Squad (a band of for-hire commandos who forcibly restrained dieters from overeating), says that the Solomon Project was meant as a serious commentary on our judicial system and, specifically, on the Simpson trial. "Most of America wanted to hear definitively that O. J. Simpson was guilty," he said, sipping a glass of red wine in his Sullivan Street apartment the other day. "They wanted a computer to say, 'He did it.' "

At first, Skaggs, no expert in law or computers, didn't answer the phone line that he had dedicated to the Solomon Project, though he methodically recorded all messages left at the number. His reticence backfired when callers, desperate to find Dr. Bonuso, besieged the N.Y.U. press office with inquiries. Initially, N.Y.U. offered to help publicize the Solomon Project, but after the school discovered that no Joseph Bonuso taught there, its attorneys threatened legal action.

Skaggs, meanwhile, was emboldened by the number of responses and, as Dr. Bonuso, began to take phone calls and grant interviews. He was even a guest on a couple of live radio call-in shows. No one seemed to mind as Dr. Bonuso stumbled through technical explanations of his Solomon Project. Eventually, producers from CNN tracked him down.

Skaggs was delirious: television is a hoaxter's promised land. He borrowed an office full of computers, got twenty-five actors to staff them or play reporters, and enlisted programmers to design some-

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thing—anything—to put on the computer screens. (One result: an image of O. J. Simpson's head with the word "GUILTY" flashing above it.) When CNN arrived, the presence of print "journalists" and camera crews gave the suggestion of a real media event. (One of the cameras belonged to Frederick Marx, the director of "Hoop Dreams," who was filming the hoax for a documentary on Skaggs.) For an hour and a half, actors typed away with the sour expressions of alienated data-entry clerks, while Skaggs, sitting before the camera with the straight face of a career prankster, predicted doom for human juries. After the CNN crew left, Skaggs looked around the room at his actors, pumped his fist, and howled, "Yes!" Two days later, after taping angry responses from some lawyers, CNN ran the segment on "PrimeNews." The story was aired repeatedly on "Headline News," and a multimedia version is still posted at CNN's World Wide Web site.

Joey Skaggs

It turns out that the reading public was more skeptical than the media. A hundred or so letters were sent to the Solomon Project; one, from a K. Michael Young, of Nome, Alaska, ended, "Really, I would like to hear from you that this is a strange joke, meant to promote and provoke discussion about the very serious matter of justice." A beaming Skaggs crooned, "I can't wait to call this guy up and say, 'Right on!' "

OPERA BLUFFA

MINUTES into the first intermission for "The Makropulos Case," a slightly dishevelled and hugely annoyed man clutching an Eddie Bauer backpack drops into Seat E-22, in the balcony of the Metropolitan Opera House. He's angry. "The damn cab didn't come," he is saying. "The damn subway didn't come."

E-22 (not his real seat) never misses a curtain—and he attends more than a hundred musical events a year, including operas, concerts, recitals, and master classes. He blames the damn weather. He says, unconvincingly, "That's O.K. All anybody is interested in is the final act anyway. It will still make a good recording."

E-22 is, in his phrase, a "pirating opera queen." He has recorded more than fifty performances, solely for his own pleasure. Among piraters, he's convinced that his tapes are unmatched—they're recorded digitally and in stereo. The Met is a favorite venue, despite the "Important Notice" posted in the lobby that says, "The photographing or sound recording of any performance or the possession of any device for such photographing or sound recording inside this theatre without the written permission of the management is prohibited by law."

"Just in terms of my own personal ethics, as far as I'm concerned the taping I'm doing is absolutely harmless," says E-22, who neither sells nor trades the tapes. He even considers his efforts noble. For example, Renata Scotto's momentous portrayal of Kundry in "Parsifal," at the opera house in Schwerin, Germany, is not available commercially but is archived in pirated recordings, his and others'.

Met Balcony seats are ideal for recording, according to E-22, as are Rows V and forward in the orchestra (but not too close). The Dress Circle and the Grand Tier, with their overhanging balconies, are more expensive than parts of the stratospheric Family Circle but not nearly as acoustically pure. "The sound along the walls can be very good," he says. Plus, denizens of those cheaper seats are less likely to begrudge him a bootleg trophy. Once, E-22 watched as another taper was escorted from an orchestra seat at Carnegie Hall—a chilling prospect. The tape was erased. "Somebody got all moral about it and narc-ed," E-22 says. "Probably a Republican."

A loner in a shadowy milieu, E-22 has never been busted himself. His thousand-dollar secret is a portable Sony DAT recorder fed by two dime-size microphones attached permanently to a timeworn dark blazer—his "magic jacket," as he calls it. "Can you see the microphones?" he asks. A mike dangles from a slit in each armpit and nestles between arm and side. The mikes are not visible at all, so long as he walks and sits stiffly.

His manner grows odd only as the lights begin to dim and he reaches into his armpits to cock the mikes forward, with a snap, one at a time. The mikes, attached to malleable copper wires, protrude five inches or so from his body. A corpulent man sitting on his left, attired in leather suspenders and a leather waistcoat, bristles at the commotion, unsuspecting.

WHILE orchestra members enter the pit and the audience begins to applaud, E-22 scrambles methodically to get the jack out of his blazer and plug the mikes into the deck, which is inside the unzipped backpack on his lap. He presses Record, and the deck's backlit L.C.D. window casts a turquoise spray up his belly and beneath his chin.

At the second intermission, he declares his neighbors to be aggravatingly bronchial and demonstrative. "It's partly the title screens," he says. "People laugh a lot more now because they get more of the jokes." In the final act, Jessye Norman, as the three-hundred-and-thirty-seven-year-old diva Emilia Marty, draws a pistol on those who would keep her from the elixir for eternal life, driving the opera's pitch upward. "I'm dying," she sings, just as a man one row back begins a prolonged attempt to stifle a sneeze. The man pins it down; it gets away. Twice. "Father in Heaven! I cannot go on," the diva's diva pronounces liquidly as the pandemonium in the audience mounts. "There's no joy in goodness. There's no joy in evil. No joy in this world." The stage erupts in flames.

And E-22 tucks his mikes back into his armpits, whispering a consolation: "I have orchestra tickets for the next performance." ♦

COLUMBUS

The journey's tough:
troughs or else shoals
challenge each crossing.
We navigate
the Avenue:
do we change course
or simply sail
the puddle's ocean?

—ELISE PASCHEN

"Clinton's Baer Hug," John Heilemann; "To the Dogs," Jesse Kornbluth; "Jury Tampering," Warren St. John; "Opera Bluffa," David France.

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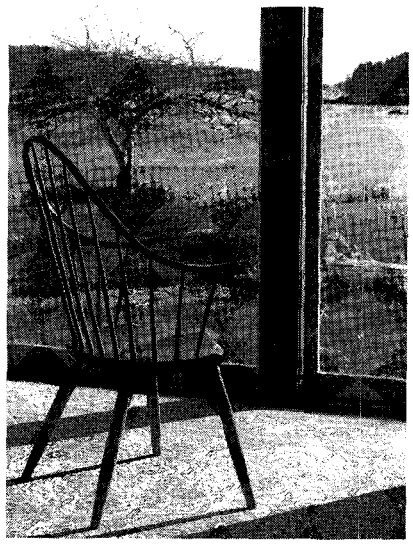

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ANNALS OF SHOW BUSINESS

BULLY BOY

The pleasures of working with Hollywood's icon of excess, the late Don Simpson.

BY JOHN GREGORY DUNNE

DRUGS, sex, bright lights, wild nights, the bad and the beautiful—the curiously old-fashioned cadences of Hollywood legend are what people hear when Don Simpson's name is mentioned. The film community has always embraced those who sin in style, and if ever they are brought up short, the way Fatty Arbuckle was, his career ruined after he was acquitted, in 1922, of causing the death of the starlet Virginia Rappe during rough sex, they are perfect source material for unseemly too-much, too-soon morality parables.

Don Simpson died January 19th, in a bathroom of his house in Stone Canyon. He was fifty-two, and around Hollywood he was as well known for abusing substances as for being, with his partner Jerry Bruckheimer, one of the few signature producers in the motion-picture industry. His death brought real sadness to the community, as well as an unfortunate and self-serving mantra of It-was-only-a-matter-of-time or I-was-trying-to-get-him-into-rehab. A spokesman for the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner said that Simpson had died of natural causes: "There were no drugs around. No drug paraphernalia, nothing to show any drugs were involved." An autopsy was scheduled, and a police investigation into the circumstances of the death continues.

An exhibitionist who seemed ready and willing to tell any reporter who would listen about his intemperate indulgences with sex and controlled substances, Simpson was famous for flaunting his bad-boy excesses. "I am a child of my times," he told the Los Angeles *Times Magazine* in 1993. "There's very little I haven't done. And I'm sorry for none of it." Hollywood is nirvana for those who would reinvent themselves. Anecdote passes for history, and anecdotes are nothing but factoids of questionable provenance. Since these anecdotes are usually provided by professional storytellers, the not altogether unbecoming result is that the stories that show folk tell about themselves have the shorthand sense of being scenes from a screenplay, with dialogue, set decoration, and camera movements. In such circumstances, truth is an acceptable casualty, the narrative all.

In the biographical narrative Simpson provided, he was the son of stern Baptist parents, and characterized his church-going Alaska childhood as "a more sedate form of the wacko from Waco." The stories about him were legion, and were rarely denied; he carried a flight bag holding a split of champagne, a stash of cocaine, and a loaded handgun. Everyone who worked for him seemed to have a cinematic back story; he told reporters that his houseman was not only a cordon-bleu chef but also a former Secret Service agent. He dressed entirely in black, and claimed not to wear his Levi's beyond the first washing (although he sometimes said the second); the classier Hollywood madams—Heidi Fleiss and Mme. Alex—were always ready to give him a character reference. With women, there was a component of either misogyny or attention deficit, in that the one-night stand was the favored sexual entanglement.

Under exclusive contract to Paramount in the eighties, Simpson and Bruckheimer were icons of the high-concept movie—"Flashdance" (blue-collar woman welder becomes a ballerina), "Beverly Hills Cop" and its sequel, "Beverly Hills Cop 2" (street detective from Detroit operating in Zip Code 90210), and "Top Gun" (cowboy Navy jet jockeys fight and love at Mach 2). "Don invented the high-concept formula for the eighties," the producer Lynda Obst told the Los Angeles *Times*. "Announce the big idea in the first act and resolve in the next two acts, often with a contest." Simpson and Bruckheimer liked to catch stars on the way up, before their power and perks got in the way. "Beverly Hills Cop" was originally a Sylvester Stallone action picture, rewritten for Eddie Murphy; "Top Gun"

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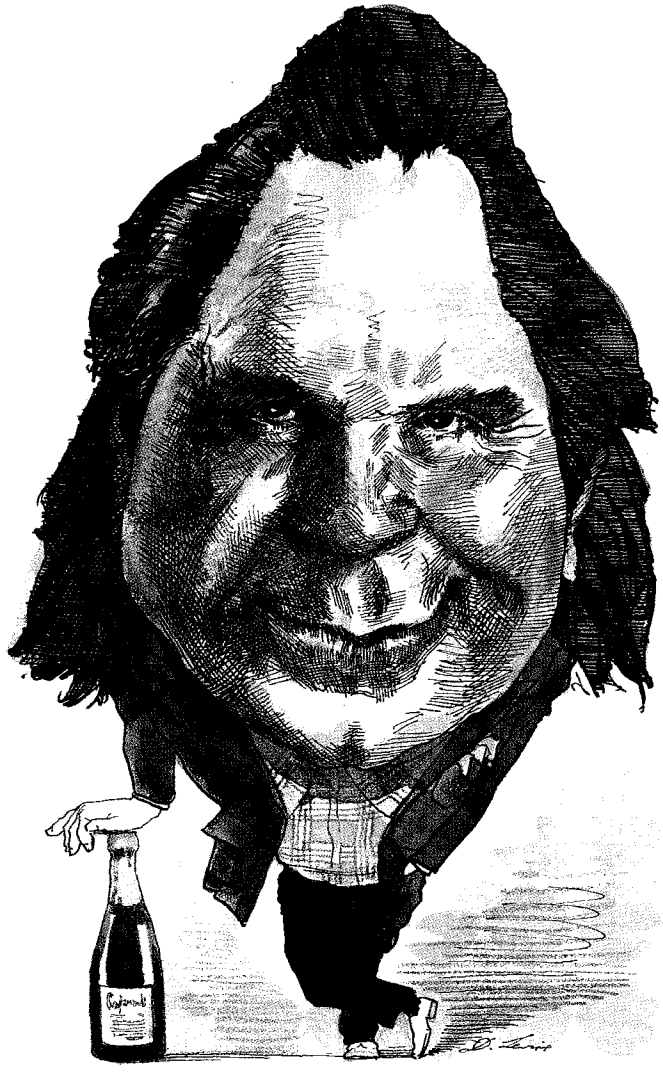
put Tom Cruise into orbit. By 1991, their string of hits had grossed more than two billion dollars, making them rich beyond dreams of avarice. What one remembers about their movies is the momentum and the beat, the music as much as the story; the pictures they made were essentially MTV videos of feature-film length.

Writers on a Simpson-Bruckheimer project came and went as if through a revolving door; a dozen, two dozen, three dozen script drafts were not unusual. Simpson's stock in trade was trying to control writers, and in fact he considered himself the co-author of any script he produced. Beating up on writers is a Hollywood blood sport; everyone in the business thinks he or she can write, if only time could be found; that writers find the time is proof of their inferior position on the food chain. What producers do is rarely understood, and seldom appreciated. "A producer," Mike Nichols once remarked, "comes on the set and says, 'I don't like the shoes.' " This was not Simpson's way. "We're not only hands on, we're feet on," he said. "We don't take a passive role in any shape or form." With a brazen drive that startled even a community built on self-promotion, he courted stardom and demanded recognition as a filmmaker. No one understood his craving for credit as well as Bruckheimer: "Don felt, and he was right, that unless you say, 'I made this movie,' it will be Paramount's 'Top Gun.' It will be a studio movie."

After the relative failure of the Tom Cruise stock-car-racing picture "Days of Thunder," Simpson and Bruckheimer went through a fallow period, and departed Paramount for the Walt Disney Company, trailing a certain amount of awed bad feeling in their wake; there were lawsuits and private detectives and allegations of high and low jinks, both financial and sexual. In spite of Disney's carefully nurtured straitlaced reputation, Jeffrey Katzenberg, whom Simpson and Bruckheimer had worked with when Katzenberg was at Paramount, courted them assiduously, signing them to a non-exclusive five-year deal with Disney's Hollywood Pictures, an arrangement less open-ended and with more constraints than the one they had enjoyed at Paramount.



DAVID LEVINE

Simpson's bad behavior masked one of the business's sharpest minds.

It was in the winter of 1992 that Don Simpson officially entered our life. My wife, Joan Didion, and I had known Don and Jerry in the unofficial way that everyone who works in Hollywood knows everyone else who works in Hollywood. Eyes would meet in a restaurant, and there would be an almost imperceptible nod that would be returned with an equally imperceptible nod; words were never exchanged nor introductions necessary. We had completed our contractual rewrites on a Disney script called "Up Close & Personal," and when that appeared to be going nowhere we were casting around for another screenplay assignment. According to our agents, Don and Jerry wanted us to consider an idea, based on an original story by Simpson, about a forty-year government coverup of U.F.O. sightings. This was not the kind of idea that usually came our way (most producers regarded us as specialists in the precious and the neurasthenic), and we told our agents that we were extremely interested.

In late February of 1992, we discussed the project, then tentatively called "Dharma Blue" (we never did learn the meaning of the title, but liked the sound of it), with Don and Jerry when they were in New York on other film business. Simpson had the dimensions of, and even resembled, a carved Eskimo totem from the Alaska of his youth. He was staying in a five-room suite at the Regency Hotel, with a chauffeured stretch limousine on twenty-four-hour call. (Bruckheimer has a pied-à-terre in downtown New York.) We schmoozed first, feeling each other out. Hollywood conversation is all context, shared references, and coded knowledge of the private idiosyncrasies of very public people. Don knew the codes, and when it was established that we did, too, we got down to business. We saw Simpson's U.F.O. coverup story as a kind of paranoid-extraterrestrial "JFK" ("All the President's Men" and Costa-Gavras's "Z" were the movie equivalents that Simpson had in mind), in which we would never see any living alien matter from the farther reaches of the universe. Our preliminary discussions seemed to be in synch, and we agreed to meet in Los Angeles in a month's time with an approach for "Dharma Blue."

Before our next meeting, we did some checking on Simpson and Bruckheimer, as we always do when dealing with people we don't know. They were bully boys, especially Simpson, and made no bones about it. In general, we prefer doing business with the bully boys rather than with the smoothies. The clout of the bully boys allows them to act as a baffle between you and the studio, shield-

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ing you from those mind-deadening omnibus meetings at which everyone present feels the necessity to say something; the bully boys do these meetings, and filter through to the writer only those notes they think worthwhile. The bad behavior they seldom bother to refute—a choleric reputation can be an edge in the movie industry's interpersonal relations—rarely takes into account that they are usually smart. If you let them know you will yell back when they yell at you, they tend either to listen or to fire you quickly; the smoothies just smile as they measure your rib cage for the ribs between which they will slip the stiletto.

To help us prepare for our meeting, Simpson and Bruckheimer had sent us a massive amount of material about U.F.O.s. There were back issues of the magazine *UFO*, a copy of the Encyclopedia of Personal Surveillance (Book II: "How to Get Anything on Anybody"), a Nexis cache of newspaper and magazine clips, a tape of a "60 Minutes" segment about a cashiered U.S. Navy officer whose élite SEAL unit had tested the security of Air Force One and several nuclear submarines by trying to break into them, usually successfully. There were videotapes of possible U.F.O. sightings, a bibliography of two hundred U.F.O. books, the listed and unlisted telephone numbers of U.F.O. researchers, a Las Vegas TV interview with a scientist who claimed he had worked at a top-secret military facility near Mercury, Nevada, where he said he had seen evidence of a government-sponsored U.F.O. coverup (that the scientist was part owner of a legal Nevada brothel compromised his bona fides), catalogues of U.F.O. trade shows, and transcripts of U.F.O. symposia, featuring the arguments of both U.F.O. debunkers and the true believers, called Ufologists.

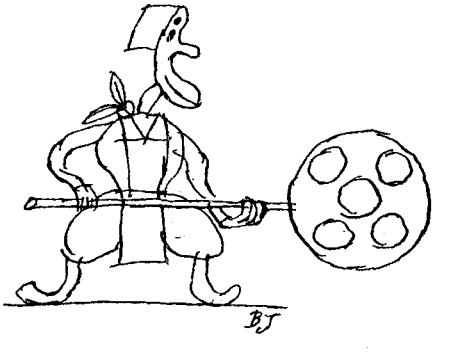
We sifted through this vast trove, and on March 30, 1992, in our suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel, we pinned three-by-five cards to a cork bulletin board and laid out a simple story for Simpson and Bruckheimer. There was an over-the-hill reporter, Harry Costello by name; there was an Edward Teller clone who was the director of a lab funded largely by government contracts; there was his daughter, an inorganic chemist with an interest in disposing of nuclear waste who would be the reporter's love interest; there was a gay physicist who had lost his security clearance because of his homosexuality—or perhaps he had not; there was a genius prodigy scientist who at age sixteen had invented his own argon laser but had turned into a U.F.O. crackpot; there were several murdered bodies; more than seven hundred thousand dollars in small bills was deliberately set on fire and destroyed; and the McGuffin was the string theory of gravity—a first, I would wager, in the annals of American cinema.

Simpson and Bruckheimer took it all in, asked all the right questions, then noncommittally agreed to meet with us in New York in ten days.

BACK in New York, we received thirty-eight pages of notes from Simpson. "Regardless of the plethora of comments I will end up making about logic and structure and motivation," he wrote, "I want to emphasize that Joan and John have done a superb job already as regarding what's implied in terms of 'talent,' 'texture,' and 'mise-en-scene.' " We were not quite sure what that meant, but Simpson was nothing if not thorough. On April 9, 1992, we met again with him and Jerry Bruckheimer in his maxi-suite at the Regency, going through the notes page by page. When the meeting began to run into dinner, Simpson said he would call his secretary in Los Angeles and ask her to delay the reservation she had previously made at a restaurant twenty blocks north of the Regency on the Upper East Side. Since this seemed a roundabout way of doing it, and since we were regulars at this restaurant, Joan offered to call the owner directly.

No, Simpson said emphatically.

He placed the call to Los Angeles, and Los Angeles called the restaurant.



A MONTH later, after sending Don and Jerry a detailed outline of "Dharma Blue," we received another memo from Simpson, this one thirty-seven pages long. In spite of Simpson's logorrhea, his notes were usually on the money, the kind that anticipate problems in the third act because of a plot point taken in the first act. There is no such thing as a third-act problem, Don liked to say. Third-act problems are solved by fixing the first and second acts. He said we should consider the reporter protagonist as "a sort of defrocked Sy Hersh"; we had been thinking of Carl Bernstein, so we were at least on the same page. The problem with such lengthy notes, however, is that they tend to discourage spontaneity and to encourage absolute adherence to an outline. It is like a game of pitch and catch: the producer pitches

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Not just lilacs
are like that;
other purples also
leave us vacant
portals, susceptible
to vagrant spirits.
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of lilacs: who goes
near it is erased.
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the senses don't
attach us to a place
or time: we're *used*
by sweetness—
taken, defenseless,
invaded by a line
of Saracens,
Picts, Angles,
double rows of
fragrance-loving
ancients—people
matched casually
by nose in an
impersonal and
intermittent immortality
of purple.

—KAY RYAN

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ideas, the writers catch them; passed balls are not allowed. Pitching is the important part of the creative process; writing is simply taking dictation, and the writer a highly paid stenographer. "We're on very solid ground when it comes to the majority of our characterizations," Simpson concluded. "And when the problems I've suggested in this memo have been addressed the relationships between the characters will definitely work, and their actions at each turn will be unassailably plausible. Hooray for that!"

Not a page of the script had been written.

By September of 1992, we had finished a first draft of "Dharma Blue." Simpson seemed ecstatic. "Before we get into anything else," he wrote, "let me say for the record that this is one of the best first drafts we have ever received, and we're thrilled to have it this way, because god knows, the reverse has been true. The screenplay is exceedingly well written, well paced and well structured. It moves like the wind." This was nice to read, but it was not the first time we had heard a script of ours described as "best first draft I have ever read." What this phrase really means is that it will be the first of many drafts. To reinforce this implicit point, Simpson then rattled off twenty-eight additional pages of notes for us to discuss in Los Angeles in mid-September.

Simpson, Bruckheimer, and Joan all had the flu the day we met at Simpson's house in Bel Air. Designed to his order for both play and work (Don rarely went to his office at the Disney studio in Burbank; his staff came to him), the house, and the pool house behind it, had the cold charm of a high-tech igloo. There were closets full of Armani suits, and there were top-of-the-line sound and video systems; everything was climate-controlled and seemed there to facilitate whatever the sexual or substance abandonment of the moment was. After two hours of sneezing and racking coughs, during which nothing much was accomplished, Don and Jerry told us to proceed to the next draft, which we promised by Christmas.

We delivered the second draft of "Dharma Blue" on December 2, 1992. Since Don was going to be in Maui with a personal trainer over the Christmas holidays (he was a binge dieter, which was

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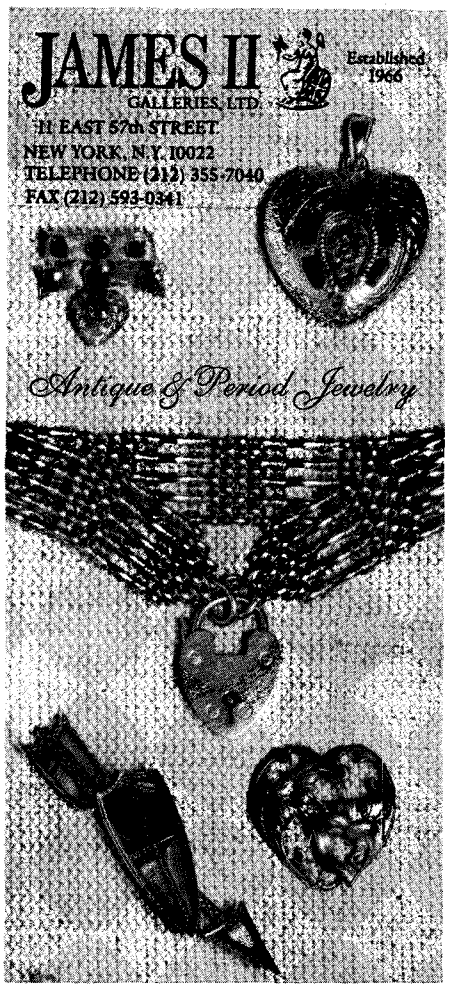

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just one more of the abuses his body bore), we decided to go to Hawaii ourselves and meet with him to work on the second-draft changes. The first draft of "Dharma Blue," remember, had "thrilled" Don and Jerry. It was "one of the best first drafts" they had ever read. It moved "like the wind." Four weeks after delivering the second draft, however, we had not heard from Simpson or Bruckheimer, nor was there any word once we got to Hawaii. No notes, no further aloha plans; the unnatural silence gave us the distinct feeling that the wind had died down. The Monday after New Year's, the Simpson-Bruckheimer office notified us that Don's latest set of notes would be air-expressed to us in New York. We asked for a copy to be sent to us in Honolulu so we could read them on the flight home.

The notes were vintage Simpson, twenty-three discursive pages, beginning with a pro-forma bow in our direction: "Well, we've made progress with this draft and there's one thing I can say with certainty: this is going to be a major, major movie." It was even going to be "one of the biggest movies ever." However: "There are some notes from the first draft that weren't executed, and there are things which are confusing." What we found especially perplexing was the reproach that we had not followed Simpson's specific instructions, which had been laid out in his first-draft notes, in our notes at the meeting at his house in Bel Air, and in one rambling telephone conversation he had with Joan one evening when she was getting dinner and I was getting drunk.

In fact, Simpson's notes were not all that bad, nor that difficult to address. The problem was that Don was asking us to insert plot points we thought we had already inserted—in rather too much detail. It is not all that easy to write a plausible story about U.F.O.s, and we were not up to rewriting under threat of the bully-boy truculence in Simpson's memo: "We need the ending that we've laid out time and time again. . . . It's in writing in my notes. It works. It's dramatic. It's the movie we want to make."

In response, we wrote Simpson a memorandum in which we contradicted his notes point by point, documenting our argument with page numbers from our second draft, down to *ibid* and *op cit*. When Simpson wrote querulously, "We're missing any kind of significant motivation for Harry to follow up on the U.F.O. story . . . why does he continue to pursue it? We need something here that will make us understand why Harry doesn't run far and fast from the danger," we replied:

> Re note 2, part one: Harry's character and motivation, and why he continues on with the story:
>
> a) Harry is a "reporter as litigated against as he is celebrated" (Joanne, script p. 17); an "action junkie" (Jack Paige; script p. 18); if a story's "got a MAC-10," Jack Paige complains, "you're there" (also p. 18); he works on hunches, on one of which he won a Pulitzer Prize, on another of which the paper got sued (p. 18); "a crazy motherfucker" (Roy Stout, p. 24); why does he continue to pursue this story (see p. 41) when Harry says: "Look. Since I crashed at Rhyolite, a guy who's supposed to be dead turns up alive, I get a gun stuck in my face twice, I get danced around at the Battle Lab, and the guy who's supposed to be dead shows up at my apartment saying if he doesn't get lost, we . . . are . . . both . . . history. The next morning he is history. Big time cocaine dealer, quote unquote. Who just happened to have access to a top secret military facility. I don't know what's going on. But I get the feeling I better find out . . ."
>
> THIS IS THE MOTIVATION. IT CAN BE UPPED, OR IT CAN BE DIFFERENT. DISCUSS?

And so it went, for thirty-eight densely argued single-spaced pages, almost a parody Simpson memo. We were told that Don had returned from Maui and gone directly to the Canyon Ranch for continued maintenance of mind and body. Still we heard nothing. Then one day Jerry Bruckheimer called from California. Jerry was the quiet man of the team, a hockey and basketball fan and an opera enthusiast, who maintained a sixteen-year relationship with his wife, Linda Balahoutis, before they finally got married. He said little, but what he said was usually clarifying, and he was the perfect heat shield for Simpson. Jerry said that he and Don had read our memo, that it was extremely interesting, with many good points, that we had made a major contribution to the project, that it was headed in the right direction, and that we were going to get paid in full, even for the changes and drafts and polishes we had not yet written. He said he was coming to New York in March, and he hoped we could have lunch.

"We just got fired," I said to Joan when we hung up.

"No, we didn't get fired, we're getting full payment," Joan said.

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"Babe, you sound like Robert McNamara wondering if Lyndon Johnson had really fired him when he shipped him to the World Bank. Trust me—full pay or not, we just got canned."

We did see Bruckheimer for lunch in New York in March, and again, with Linda, for dinner in April. Several months after we left the picture, we got a call from Don. Since none of the big Simpson-Bruckheimer projects for Disney had yet gone before the cameras, and with the word on the street that their M.O. did not play in the nineties, the Los Angeles *Times Magazine* was preparing a piece on "What Ever Happened to Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer?" ("Don & Jerry's Blue Period," the article was called when it was published.) Simpson and Bruckheimer were coöperating with the writer, and Don wondered if I would talk to him; he did not suggest or even hint that I make nice, just chat with him. I was more than willing, and told the writer they were as good as any producers we had ever worked with.

A true thing.

OVER the next three years, we would have dinner with Jerry and Linda when they passed through New York, and we would ask about "Dharma Blue," which Don was now calling "Zone of Silence." Various writers had worked on it, but the script was still not ready. In the meantime, we had gone back to "Up Close & Personal," had left it again, had gone back a third time, and finally, in March of 1995, the picture began shooting, with Robert Redford and Michelle Pfeiffer playing the leads. On January 19th, we saw a print at the Disney offices in New York, and that evening we called Donald De Line, the president of Disney's Touchstone division, to thank him for hanging in with the picture for the eight years it took to get it made. It was Donald who told us about Simpson's death a few hours before.

When we were finally able to track down Jerry Bruckheimer, he was scarcely able to speak. He and Don had only recently dissolved their partnership, which had been fraying for some time, even with three hits in their last year together: "Bad Boys"; "Crimson Tide," a nuclear-submarine thriller with Denzel Washington and Gene Hackman; and "Dangerous Minds," with Michelle Pfeiffer. Don's excesses and indulgences, the concomitant volatile mood swings, the weight gains and the binge dieting, the weeks spent at spas trying to flog mind and body back into shape, had finally exacted their toll, abusing Simpson physically and his partnership with Jerry terminally. Last August, a forty-four-year-old doctor and would-be screenwriter named Stephen Ammerman had been found dead in Simpson's pool house, overdosed on cocaine, morphine, Valium, and an antidepressant called Venlafaxine. Stephen Ammerman was said to have been Don's personal physician, and to have been treating him for his drug problem.

That had been bad news, a note of foreboding, and now Don himself was dead. Several days later, Joan and I looked at the notes of a telephone conversation we had had with him in 1992 about the reporter character in "Dharma Blue." "He's this guy who doesn't play by the rules, doesn't play the odds, a loose cannon," Don had said. "He has always gambled, he has always played a lone hand, played on the edge." In retrospect, we knew now that he was talking, consciously or not, about himself, not Sy Hersh or Carl Bernstein. "Listen to me," he wanted the character to say at some point. "I play with my guts." The woman character would interrupt. "If you played with your head, you wouldn't be hanging on by your fingernails," she would say. "Wouldn't be me," Don wanted the male character to reply.

Whatever his weaknesses, and perhaps because of those weaknesses, Don Simpson was invigorating to work with. He was smart. He was funny. He was outrageous. He was straight. If he did not like something, there was no shilly-shally; he hit you right between the eyes with it. O.K., he would say, let's fix it. Here's how I think we should do it. Let's get it on. What the great producers do is make you enthusiastic, by the sheer force of their personalities, about the most ludicrous ideas—in our case, the possibility of U.F.O.s.

We would have worked with him again in a New York minute. ♦

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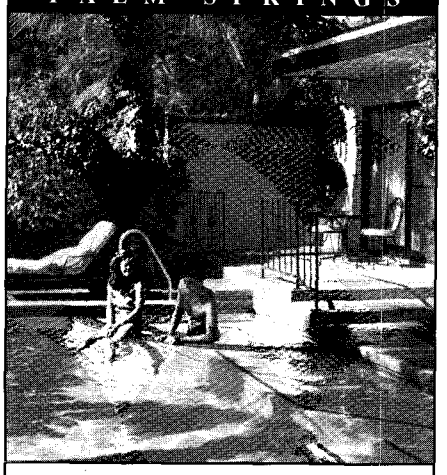

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PARIS JOURNAL

CINÉMA DISPUTÉ

French intellectuals square off over liberalism's current defining issue—or, rather, over a movie about it.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

It is difficult for anyone who has spent time among intellectuals in America not to envy the life of intellectuals in France. Their books aren't segregated in the backs of the bookstores, and don't wear defeated-looking university-press jackets. They're put right up front where the customers are, and their jackets are either plain white or decorated with a single cryptic detail taken from a Renaissance painting. There are no advertisements, few blurbs, no dearly bought praise. Instead, the books are wrapped in broad paper bands announcing the names of the authors in large block letters—GLUCKSMANN, FINKIELKRAUT—as if the names alone were enough to make people want to buy the books. The French intellectuals make regular appearances on television; their guest shots are called "interventions." It would not be accurate to say that they get good tables at the restaurants they frequent—Le Voltaire, Le Récamier—only because in the restaurants they go to a good table is the one where they happen to be sitting. They make a dinner of foie gras and green-bean salad without worrying about their livers, or the geese.

They get to do all the things that intellectuals in Paris are supposed to do without caring about seeming too characteristic. In Paris, the packaged past and the usable past coexist. The Café de Flore, for instance, although it has by now posted replicas of itself to Japan and has samples of its china on sale for tourists, is also still a leading literary café, where writers like to meet to talk about their writing—as though the Russian Tea Room had always remained a room where Russians met for tea. The coziness and the common ground also mean that in Paris the fights among intellectuals are like family squabbles, bitter and familiar. Knowing your opponents intimately tends to make them look much less sinister, and more ridiculous. "*C'est absurde*" or "*C'est bizarre*" is the usual comment of one intellectual on the views of another.

Paris intellectuals have the run of the daily press, and, where the American public intellectual is rationed to three or four allusions per page (and two of those are usually from Tocqueville), a single column in *Figaro*—which politically is the French *Wall Street Journal*—by the philosopher André Glucksmann might include references to Grotius's theory of war, a four-thousand-page novel by an overlooked Serbian magic realist, and, for the common touch, the graveyard scene in "Hamlet." The allusions are the architecture of the argument, rather than its ornament. A Paris intellectual's argument doesn't so much knock you down as wrap itself around you; it leaves you feeling less convinced than surrounded. When a new fact or experience—a movie, or even a war—appears, the trick for a Paris intellectual is to enclose it within his set of allusions and abstractions before the other intellectual can get out *his* set of allusions and abstractions. And yet, for all the coziness of their world and the mistiness of their thought, Paris intellectuals—and here they are as different from their merrily nihilistic British friends as they are from their downtrodden American cousins—believe that what they say matters, and that what they think today the world will think tomorrow.

All these things—the fraternal jealousies, the direct pipeline to the popular press, the café intrigues, and the saving seriousness—were on view last year and this in the great "Underground" affair, an intellectual tempest now in its eighth month. It began—a little improbably, for what became so agitated a tussle—in the usually calm, even motionless pages of *Le Monde*. For half a century, *Le Monde* has held a position of godlike detachment above French life, only occasionally bestirring itself to hurl a thunderbolt at someone who had it coming. Last June, the editors of

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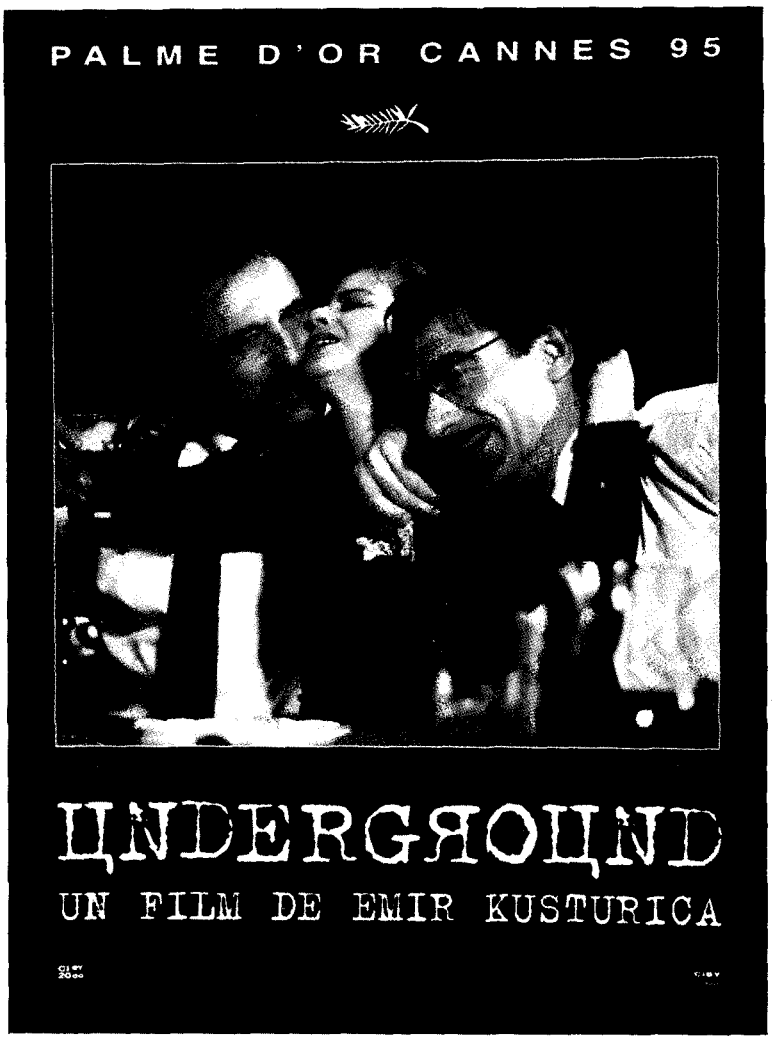
Le Monde threw a really loud one. It took the form of a polemic by the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut and was entitled "The Kusturica Fraud," and it blasted not an idea or a movement but a movie. The movie was Emir Kusturica's "Underground," which only a few days before had won the Palme d'Or at Cannes. Though Kusturica is, depending on your point of view, a Bosnian born in Sarajevo, an ex-Yugoslav, or simply a Serb, his film had been financed with French money, and its triumph at Cannes had been celebrated proudly, as a French triumph.

Finkielkraut, for his part, though French, had excellent ex-Yugoslavia credibility. He had been out early and strong on the civil wars, going back several sieges—all the way to that of Dubrovnik, in 1991, before the war in Bosnia had even begun. Finkielkraut is famous as the author of "The Defeat of the Mind," a terrific analysis of the roots of multiculturalism in the Romantic movement. He is also one of the models of a fin-de-siècle French public intellectual. He is the editor of *Le Messager Européen* and the host of a weekly radio program, and he is good on television, where he looks like Noam Chomsky after a *GQ* makeover, though he has the not entirely winning habit of shutting his eyes and shaking his head with silent laughter at the absurdity of an opponent's views.



In America, an attack by a humanist philosopher on a baroque-absurdist allegory wouldn't shake the box-office. But in France it can be fatal.

The triumph of "Underground" at Cannes, he pointed out in *Le Monde*, was due in part to a general desire to do or say something about the tragedy in Bosnia, particularly around the time of Tuzla. But the desire to do something for the right cause had made the jury at Cannes mistake a gorgeous film for a good one. What looked like an antiwar film, Finkielkraut declared, was in fact a pro-Serbian one. He went on to quote various old interviews with Kusturica which seemed to show that the director was soft on pan-Serbian nationalism, and he also cited certain scenes in the film that he thought corresponded to Serbian nationalist clichés. (In the film, invading Nazi troops are shown being greeted with enthusiasm in Zagreb but not in Belgrade; in the occult, rearview-mirror coding of Balkan politics, this means that the Croats collaborated and the Serbs didn't.) By celebrating "Underground," Finkielkraut wrote, the jury at Cannes had really celebrated "a servile illustrator, flashy with criminal clichés," whose movie was "a rock, postmodern, over-the-top, hip, Americanized version of the most drivelling and lying Serbian propaganda." Something else that made Finkielkraut's piece peculiar, and memorable, was that on close reading it seemed possible that he was the first French devotee of the new transatlantic no-look-at school of cultural criticism: whatever else "Underground" was, it was not a movie that Alain Finkielkraut had seen.

People who *had* seen "Underground," or went to see it afterward (there weren't many), might have been excused for having a hard time finding any coherent political thought, pro-Serb or not, in Kusturica's at times inspired, at times incoherent muddle of horror, comedy, and Slavic wedding music. "Underground" tells the story of two small-time Belgrade gangsters, Marko and Blackie, who join the Communist Party at the beginning of the Second World War and mix up gangsterism with bursts of anti-German derring-do. They both fall in love with a young actress, and Marko, in order to have her to himself, pretends that Tito has ordered Blackie and his gang of partisans to hide out in the basement of Marko's house until the war is over, making small arms and waiting for Tito's call. Blackie and company remain there for twenty-five years (it's a big basement), while Marko becomes an apparatchik in the Tito government. The film ends with Blackie escaping from the basement—Kusturica's characters are ageless, like Brothers Grimm villains—and becoming a Serbian militiaman. The strength of the movie lies in its bizarre poetic images—most notably, the matter-of-fact discovery by the hidden partisans of a vast network of underground tunnels running beneath the whole of Europe. Its weakness lies in Kusturica's need to stop the stream of comic invention every so often in order to wave his arms and point at his symbols. ("Communism itself was like a basement, where people were locked away," a German doctor in an insane asylum remarks helpfully at one point.)

In America, an attack by a humanist philosopher on the latent political impli-

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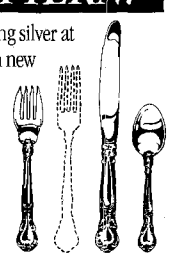

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cations of a Serbian baroque-absurdist allegory might not have got much play. It certainly wouldn't have shaken the box-office. But in France such an attack, if it is directed at a vulnerable spot, can be fatal. The idea of something's being *tainted* counts for a lot here. Finkielkraut's attack also had a special kind of credibility because he is one of the more or less liberal philosophers who have emerged here in the past decade and have burnished their reputation as public intellectuals by arguing for action in the wars in the former Yugoslavia. These writers, who include Glucksmann, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and Pascal Bruckner, are hardly a school, and certainly don't have a common method or goal, but they do have a common style and a common enemy. They are against the Parisian tradition of "master thought" and master thinkers—or, at least, against any kind of philosophy that makes people's lives and suffering secondary to a big idea, a national spirit, or an overflowing tide of historical necessity. A concluding passage in one of Glucksmann's most recent books, about the AIDS epidemic, captures the liberal philosophers' essential liberalism. The passage is actually written in the voice of Hamlet, and ends, "This earth, jealous of its nuances, will never be unified by a single ideal. Not the common good, nor a supreme master, nor an unimpeachable orthodoxy. Only the divided energy that it takes to watch for coming disasters, and sometimes to fight them together, will illuminate our darkness."

As even that tiny passage may suggest, the strength of the movement lies in its moral fervor. (No American intellectual would have the courage to write as Hamlet, while for a Brit to do so would lead right to Pseud's Corner.) The weakness of the movement, perhaps, is that the new French liberal philosophers are all for the individual case as long as it can be described in a language of general abstractions. Theirs is a particularism without particulars. They believe that everything is in the details but would rather not get bogged down in them. Reading these philosophers is a little like watching men try to find their way out of a collapsed tent: you admire the intensity of their struggle from the way the canvas bulges, but they don't ever get out into the air.

The war in the former Yugoslavia has been, among other things, a testing ground for this style of liberalism, much as the war in Spain was for a previous generation—a way of getting out of the tent and into the air. French liberal intellectuals agree with some American ones in finding the war in the former Yugoslavia the defining act of the end of the century, but there is a big difference about what, exactly, it is defining. In America, the argument about the Balkans is an argument about us, our engagement with the world, our risks, our "role." In France, the struggle there isn't about "us" but about what you'd have to call "them"s—about what kind of small-state nationalism democrats ought to encourage.

Experienced cryptologists of French argument have suggested that what really lay behind Finkielkraut's attack on "Underground" was the problem of defining good and bad nationalisms. "On the question of nationalism, I have changed my views—under the pressure of the reality of history, of my own experience, and particularly of the Yugoslavian wars," Finkielkraut said not long ago. "Nationalism is dangerous, of course, but the attachment to nation is a human feeling. Nationalism can be simply another name for the reservoir of memory and common experience. And the idea that small nations are necessarily closed and provincial is completely false. Small nations are far *more* cosmopolitan, of necessity, than large ones. It's the big ones that are the most insular. The trouble in Yugoslavia was aggressive Serbian nationalism—expansionist, exclusive, anti-cosmopolitan nationalism." The distinction between the good kind of nationalism (that of the Slovenians and the Croatians) and the bad kind might have a remote base in a distinction made by Finkielkraut's mentor, the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas. Lévinas thought that you could make a distinction between a bad way of finding your identity and a good way. The bad way tries to find its identity by emphasizing its difference from some "other." The good way wants to have "other"s around, in order not to be like them. For Finkielkraut, Kusturica's real crime may have been to present Serbian nationalism as a

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good, "other"-respecting nationalism, full of weddings and parties and folklore, rather than as what it really is—an "other"-hating nationalism, aggressive and outward-turning.

"I had read an interview that Kusturica gave in connection with the movie," Finkielkraut explained. "He was talking about his use of the documentary footage of the Nazis arriving in the Yugoslavian capitals—the Croatians and the Slovenians collaborate, the Serbs resist. That was typical of the most vulgar Serbian propaganda, and so I wrote my article in *Le Monde* and was attacked by the cultural élite. But it had its effect, and, in fact, the film was a failure at the box office. Then, when I saw the film, I disliked it even more. Kusturica completely falsifies the history of Yugoslavia. The metaphor of 'Underground' is misleading in regard to Yugoslavia and its experience. Imprisonment in the past is not the issue, anyway. The only people who are satisfied with that as a metaphor for Europe are intellectuals for whom anti-Communism is always enough. Listen, intellectuals are always behind the events. We want anti-Communist metaphors, even after Communism is gone, and what we are missing all the while is the growth of a kind of baroque nationalism, of which 'Underground' is an example. All that terrible Slav sentimentalism that I hate—all these weddings and drunken embraces, spilling over into the love of violence."

In France, real things are always being moved into a higher realm of abstract ideas, which has the effect of eventually turning every event into a metaphor: the *affaire des logements* became a metaphor for the French system of entitlements, the railroad workers' strike for bourgeois discontent. The rights and wrongs of "Underground" had, willy-nilly, become a metaphor for the problem of nationalism. Finkielkraut's position was a kind of sandwich, with an abstract proposition on one side, a metaphor on the other, and a little bit of experience in between. The abstract philosophical proposition had to do with "other"ness; the movie was the metaphor for good and bad nationalism; and Kusturica, the artist, just happened to be the meat caught in the middle.

It was not until late October that Kusturica finally replied to Finkielkraut in *Le Monde:* he wrote a long, bitter, ironic fantasy that sounded very much like the cry of someone who has been made the meat in another man's sandwich. Kusturica speculated that *Le Monde*, by letting somebody who hadn't seen his movie write about it, may have intended to malign him, but it hadn't done a very good job, and he could do a better one. Kusturica, who lives in a farmhouse in Normandy, went on to sketch a series of images of what really effective anti-Kusturica propaganda would be like: A journalist and a photographer would infiltrate his entourage, and they would find, "under the Persian carpet in the living room, a trapdoor. They open it and, to their horror, discover the entrance to an underground cavern. This dark place would house a great number of ex-Yugoslavian refugees. . . . My son, an enormous knife between his teeth, directs the young refugees in military exercises. These underground maneuvers bear a code name: Normandy, integral part of Greater Serbia." Kusturica ended even more bitterly than he had begun, by expressing to the editors of *Le Monde* his regret that "you preferred to give space to some master thinker of the second rank who, when Bosnia has passed out of fashion . . . will be just as passionate about Kashmir." Kusturica's publication of this text was generally considered here a kind of surrender—irony, after all, is the badge of the defeated—and only a few weeks later Kusturica said that he was quitting moviemaking for good. He disappeared—went underground, it seems, and pulled the trapdoor shut behind him. Meanwhile, Finkielkraut had triumphantly responded with a new piece—this one in *Libération*—announcing that he had now seen the film and, bad as he had thought it would be, it was even worse.

For a few days, the "Underground" affair seemed to be over. Then, suddenly, two more of the leading French humanists jumped in—and, surprisingly, took Kusturica's side. Bernard-Henri Lévy, in his weekly notebook in *Le Point*—the French-intellectual equivalent of Jimmy Cannon's old "Nobody Asked Me But . . ." column—came to the film's defense, though he also said, in effect, that he thought Kusturica himself was a louse. More startling was the entrance of André Glucksmann into the movie-reviewing game, in the form of an open

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letter to Kusturica, published in *Libération*. "Dear Emir Kusturica," he wrote. "Your film is beautiful, tender, furious, overwhelming. I laughed, I cried, I admired. . . . Leaving the movie theatre, I thought that an artist had once again been projected beyond himself by the inhuman atrocity of war. As if confronting the insupportable had obliged you to make a near-masterpiece—like 'Candide,' by Voltaire, or, closer to us, 'Kaputt,' by Malaparte, or 'Life and Fate,' by Vassily Grossman." He noted, for the benefit of those suspicious souls who thought they might be in the presence of a café conspiracy, that he and Kusturica had never met. Glucksmann then drew the major point of the allegory: that one cannot come out of Communism whole. "All of Eastern Europe has emerged mutilated from a cave where nobody saw time passing," he suggested. He added, "Two or three sorry spirits have displayed in Paris the impertinence of condemning before seeing. Don't exaggerate their weight," and then said, grandly, "Your film confirms Novalis: 'After a miserable war, we must write comedies.' . . . If we don't learn . . . to laugh at the murderer, then the murderer laughs at us."

Glucksmann had nimbly stepped around the nationalism-good-or-bad question by insisting that the subject of Kusturica's film wasn't nationalism at all but the consequences of Communism—that it wasn't a national myth of Serbia but a transnational allegory of the post-Cold War world. The film no longer belonged to a set of allusions having to do with nationalism; it belonged to a set of allusions having to do with totalitarianism, and could therefore be understood as an entirely different kind of metaphor. "Underground" now became an anti-totalitarian masterpiece.

"The war in Yugoslavia isn't a nationalist war at all," Glucksmann said recently. "It is a war of the army against civilians. Not a war among armies but a war of a single army, split into groups, against civilians. This is the fundamental fact." It was the day after Christmas, and Glucksmann, the most impressive French philosopher of his generation, was sitting in the Café de Cluny, on the Boulevard Saint-Michel. Glucksmann looks like Charlie Watts's bookish older brother, and is probably the most inspired talker, alluder, and explainer in a city of inspired talkers, alluders, and explainers. (Once, at dinner with friends, he sneezed in the middle of one of his commentaries—abruptly, and three times in succession. Immediately, he picked up the thread of his argument, without dropping an allusion. His beautiful artist wife turned to the other diners. "This," she commented proudly, "is a *spécialité* Glucks.")

"How can an intellectual talk about something he has not seen?" Glucksmann went on. "This is truly the worst possible treason of the intellectual, to judge something in ignorance. It is the political correctness of the late-nineteenth-century Church—what we call Saint-Sulpisme, petty fear—transferred to the realm of the intellect. Finkielkraut is puritanical, and therefore wants works of art to be edifying. But Kusturica's film is not really about Yugoslavia, which was not entirely a totalitarian country. His Yugoslavia is more like Poland, more like Russia, where life really was frozen in a kitsch myth of revolution. Do you know Shalamov's essay on the criminal world? Shalamov was a gulag survivor who argued that there is a permanent criminal class, a kind of gangster class in the world, an underworld with its own culture and its own rules, and that the marriage of this class to the perverted Enlightenment vision of Marxism was the essence of modern totalitarianism. You see the same thing with Mao—gangster manners and utopian visions. No one has made this idea live as art the way Kusturica has—the relation between Mafia-ism and Leninism. In Russia people say that the Mafia has come in to fill the vacuum left behind by Communism. No! It's all that's left of it.

"The great trouble in the world is that the politically correct cannot act unless they have some side or other to be for—a good country to be patriotic toward. They are unable to criticize their good country once they have chosen it. Finkielkraut and *Le Messager Européen* identify with the Croats; Bernard-Henri Lévy and *La Règle du Jeu* with the Bosnians; the writers at *Les Temps Modernes* with ex-Yugoslavia. No one can operate without a form of displaced nationalism—someone to be *for*. I think that there are enough bad guys in the world to fight against without having to invent ideal angels to fight for. My own motto for the twenty-first century is a kind of

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variant of Terence: 'Nothing inhuman should be alien to us.' I am just *against*—against the army that is conducting war on civilians, against the killing, against the collective ideal. But this is nearly impossible to make persuasive. The triumphs of the *contre* are not grand enough. Listen to me. Somalia was a triumph, a great success: there were hundreds of thousands of people starving, and people got fed. And yet people treat it as a failure. People who dream of a new world order based on the American and European way of life—parliaments and consumerism—were, of course, disappointed that we could not remake Somalia in that image. Of course we could not remake Somalia, or Rwanda. But if you define these missions realistically, in terms solely of what you are going to stop, not of what you are going to begin, there is a chance for decency. There is no need to be for. Against is enough."

GLUCKSMANN is such a powerful presence that after his article in *Libération* it seemed that he had carried the contest—had picked up "Underground" bodily and carried it into his own corral of preoccupations. But then, just this month, the Austrian experimental novelist Peter Handke, who lives in Paris and is an honorary Paris intellectual, published a two-part piece on his travels in the former Yugoslavia in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. He jumped on the "Underground" affair and accused Glucksmann of toeing the anti-Serbian line. Handke insisted that, for all Glucksmann's sonorous praise of "Underground," there was a hidden layer of disparaging irony that was meant to do Kusturica and the Serbs as much damage as Finkielkraut had done by his attack. Therefore, in a kind of judo move in the game of explication, Handke had now made Glucksmann into the most brilliantly malevolent of all Kusturica's enemies. Even people in Paris who thought that the idea was crazy had to admit that Handke's footwork was fabulous. Glucksmann, for his part, had to defend himself in the *Corriere della Sera*, which had run excerpts of Handke's articles. Glucksmann found himself replying in Italian to a German attack on his supposed assault on a Serbian epic that he had tried to defend from the imprecations of a French-Jewish partisan of Croatia. The life of the mind is hard, even in Paris. ♦

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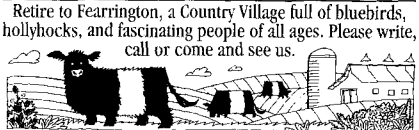

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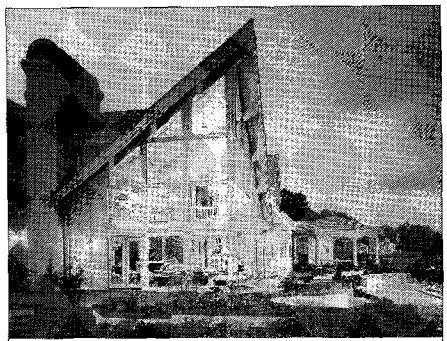

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THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER

Tony Blair, Britain's youngest-ever Labour leader, has managed to renew the Party in an unprecedented manner, but can he do the same to the nation?

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

On April 9, 1992, when the Labour Party lost its fourth successive election to the Conservatives, people began to speak of Britain as a permanent one-party nation. Before the election, it seemed inconceivable that the Conservatives could win. After the election, it seemed inconceivable that they could ever lose. There was no opposition that could beat them. The Labour Party had struggled for ten years to alter its image—from that of a reckless, union-run party of nationalizing socialists to that of a modern, forward-looking party able to govern. But the voters remained wary. Although the polls had shown Neil Kinnock and his party ahead of John Major until Election Day, people finally fell back upon what they had come to regard as the natural ruling party.

Replacing the Labour leader after a traumatic defeat had become an anthropological ceremony akin to killing the king: the Party would symbolically cut off its head and get a new one. Neil Kinnock, the Welsh "windbag," ardent, emotional, and given to poetic flights of rhetoric, was succeeded by John Smith, who was Kinnock's opposite in manner. Smith wasn't charismatic, daring, or new, and all those negatives recommended him: he made Labour seem safe. A stolid Scotsman who was a barrister by trade, he was respected on all sides for his civility, integrity, and steadiness. Over the next two years, Smith fostered enough of a sense of security to put Labour twenty points ahead in the polls. Then, on May 12, 1994, the fifty-five-year-old Smith died from a heart attack. For the next week, politics stood still. Even Conservative politicians wept in public.

Tony Blair, then the forty-one-year-old shadow Home Secretary, had admired Smith. One of Blair's first political acts had been to write a policy paper for Smith when Smith was a minister in the last Labour Government, in the seventies. Later, the two men travelled together to Party meetings. Now, in a period of national mourning, Blair saw the greatest opportunity of his political career. Under Smith's benign tutelage, Blair, the Party's most fervent modernizer, had been frustrated by the slow pace of change, fearing that it would once again produce defeat. Within hours of learning of Smith's death, Blair decided to make a bid for the Labour leadership, and immediately organized his campaign with an efficiency undeterred by grief. "The moment that John died, everyone was distraught by his death," Philip Gould, Labour's chief strategic consultant, recalls. "At the same time, everyone realized that the moment was now. Out of that great sadness came this new figure, an entirely new Labour leader. Either event would have been powerful. Both events occurring together were really powerful. They reframed attitudes toward Labour."

Since Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, in May of 1979, the Conservative Party's victories can be attributed partly to its formidable strength in the art of political war. The Conservatives were the first in Britain to run a political campaign in the American style, using slick, negative advertising created by the firm of Saatchi & Saatchi. (The image of Labour's inepti-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON
Tony Blair, London, November 30, 1995.

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tude was crystallized in a stark Saatchi-designed 1979 poster depicting an unemployment line with the slogan "Labour Isn't Working.") In 1992, the Conservatives discovered that the formula still worked; they seemed endlessly able to exploit the image of Labour as a decrepit captive of narrow-minded trade unions, as a party incapable of governing. Campaigns became repetitive affairs.

When Blair won the leadership contest, in July of 1994, the Tory marketing machine instantly began whirring again, ready to stamp a denigrative image upon its new victim. "Bambi" was the label it gave him, signifying that he was a wide-eyed innocent, wobbly on his legs. The tag also reflected the Conservatives' complacent belief that Labour leaders aren't really about the getting of power: Blair was a fawn sent to the slaughter. In the months that followed, the Tories introduced "Islington Man." Blair favors un-Labourlike pinstriped suits and has a large Victorian house in Islington, a gentrified borough of North London. The new tag was intended to classify him as nothing but an ambitious yuppie.

Neither label stuck, so a year later the Tories tried again, with "Stalin," which, not surprisingly, also failed to catch on with the public. In "Bambi," the Tories had misread the near-constant smile spread across Blair's face, mistaking geniality for softness. In "Stalin," they misread his single-mindedness as that of an old-style party boss. But Blair's unique quality, and the underlying reason he has aroused anxiety in a proportion almost equal to his popularity, is that he rejects all the accepted distinctions of class. In a country where an accent is as important as lineage, Blair's impeccable Oxford diction lacks both the cadences of the industrial north and the haughtier tones of the Home Counties. It's the accent of a well-spoken professional who projects confidence and charm. The Tories have always believed that the country is theirs to command. Blair's classlessness contains an assumption to rule that they have never encountered before. He personifies the new leadership class; he is what Britain may become.

Early last October, in Brighton, Blair appeared before the assembled Party for his second conference as the leader of what he has christened New Labour. Such annual conferences are crucibles of a party's policies and image. "I know that, for some of you, New Labour has been painful," he said. "There is no greater pain to be endured in politics than the birth of a new idea. . . . We have transformed our party. Our constitution rewritten. Our relations with the trade unions changed . . . But, I didn't come into politics to change the Labour Party. I came into politics to change the country. And I honestly believe that if we had not changed, if we had not returned our party to its values, freed from the weight of outdated ideology, we could not change the country. We could not win, and, even if we did, we would not have governed in the way Britain needs." On a personal note, he continued, "It has been hard, I know. Hard for me sometimes. Last year Bambi, this year Stalin. From Disneyland to dictatorship in twelve short months. I am not sure which one I prefer." He paused. "O.K., I prefer Bambi. Honestly." The Labour delegates laughed appreciatively, giving a kind of voice vote of acquiescence to the unreserved will to power which stood before them.

For the first time, the Tories began to feel a dread in facing Labour. In late October, a poll in the *Sunday Times* revealed that Labour had decisively seized the center ground: fifty per cent of those polled now called the Party moderate. Labour's gains were directly at the Tories' expense: only thirty-four per cent termed the Conservative Party moderate, and thirty-nine per cent labelled it right-wing. In November, a Gallup survey showed Labour thirty-nine and a half points ahead of the Tories. The *Sunday Times*, a Conservative thunderer, whined in an editorial, "This is not the way it is supposed to be. Electorates are meant to see the incumbent party as the safe choice and the opposition as a risk. Mr. Blair has managed to run Labour, in the eyes of voters, into a safety-first party."

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Late summer charms the birds out of the trees
Onto our lawn, where the cat gets them.
Aware of this but not unmanned, Matisse
Makes the whole room as sexy as the girl.

"Distributed voluptuousness," he said,
Matching the décor to her lazy gaze.
Just book me on the first flight to Morocco.
You see what I see? Feathers on the grass.

Nothing so sordid in Henri's back yard
Where colored shapes may touch, but not to crush.
Look at that death trap out there, lined with roses!
We grew a free-fire zone with fertilizer.

Caught on the ground like the Egyptian Air Force
A wrecked bird on its back appears outraged:
It could have been a contender. What a world
Of slam-bang stuff to float one fantasy

Amongst her figured curtains, blobs for flowers,
Lolling unlocked in filmy harem pants!
Where did we see her first? That place they called
Leningrad. She looked like History's cure.

And even he could use that. When he turned
An artful blank back on his wife and child

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They were arrested, leaving him to paint
In peace a world with no Gestapo in it—

A dream that came true. Agonies recede,
And if his vision hid harsh facts from him
It sharpens them for us. Best to believe
He served an indispensable ideal:

Douceur de vivre on a heroic scale—
Heaven on Earth, the Land of Oobladee.
Cloud Nine and Shangri-la hooked to the wall
As bolt holes for the brain, square wishing wells.

Suppose that like his brush my pen could speak
Volumes, our cat might stay in shape to pounce,
But only on the arm of that soft chair
You sit in now and where you would lie lulled,

An ageless, in-house *odalisque couchée*
Never to be less langorous than this,
Always dissolving in the air around you
Reality's cruel purr with your sweet whisper—

And nothing would be terrible again,
Nor ever was. The fear that we once felt
For daughters fallen ill or just an hour
Late home: it never happened. That dumb bird
Stayed in its tree and I was true to you.

—CLIVE JAMES

With the dawning of 1996, John Major awoke to discover that deaths and defections had reduced his majority in the House of Commons to five seats. Major is not required to call an election until May of 1997, but he will have to do so sooner if his majority collapses. Of a chance to contest the Prime Ministership, Blair says, "I think we are ready, and I think they literally have nothing left. I mean everything that is now done—the budget, the legislative program—is simply about trying to wrong-foot the Labour Party, and, you know, the country could really do without eighteen months of this nonsense."

Not since 1964, when Labour won (by a bare four-seat majority) on the allure of Harold Wilson's "White Heat of Technology" vision, which was considered at the time the British equivalent of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier, has Labour been perceived as future-oriented. But Wilson, a leader of the old Labour right, did not remake his party; indeed, he backtracked from the mild reform efforts of his predecessor, Hugh Gaitskell. James Callaghan, who governed as Labour's last Prime Minister, from 1976 to 1979, inherited a relic of a party, its constituency limited and its ideas exhausted. Blair has managed to give Labour a broad popular support such as it hasn't truly had since Clement Attlee succeeded Winston Churchill, in 1945. In one year, Blair has increased dues-paying Party membership by a third, bringing in a hundred and fifteen thousand new members, most of them from the middle class.

BLAIR, stripped momentarily of his pin-striped suit jacket, is hovering over the kettle in the kitchen of his Islington house. "Would you like a cup of fruit tea? Sugar with that? Lemon?" His wife, Cherie Booth, who is a Queen's Counsel (or Q.C., the senior-barrister title held by Rumpole of the Bailey), appears, adjusts her shoes, straightens her black suit, and, with a quick "Bye, dear," races out the door on the way to her law office. The front hallway is full of sports equipment and toys belonging to the Blairs' three young children, and an acoustic guitar, which is Blair's. He carries the tea tray into a living room furnished with floral-patterned chairs and sofa, and bookcases containing bound volumes of the *Weekly Law Review*.

Blair enjoys few things more than holding forth on the ills of contemporary society. He described for me, at some length, his view of the two central problems facing Western countries: how to insure economic security in a time of global technological change, and how to revive a sense of moral purpose amid widespread social fragmentation. "I think those are challenges to which the right really doesn't have an answer," he says. "The right's response is, in effect, to say, 'We want to re-create the world of fifty or sixty years ago, where the woman stayed at home, the man worked, gays were kept in the closet.' We are not going to re-create those days. I also reject, however, what I would call sixties student liberalism. In the end, there was an anarchic feel to that, and a belief that it didn't much matter what you did—you did your own thing. It was a sort of social libertarianism that is the mirror image of the economic libertarianism of some of the new right."

Blair sees himself in the same predicament as other politicians who are grappling with the problems of a transitional politics. "What is fascinating is the degree to which these problems are the same everywhere," he says. "There is great danger that we will get caught in the wedge between the new right and what I call here the old left, who simply accuse us of selling out the principles of the Labour Party or the Democrats. This is where, curiously, the critics from left and right come together."

Blair's critics have interpreted his skepticism about the old Labourism as evidence that he lacks political convictions. The Conservative right and the Labour left have united in their portrayal of him as a practitioner of "designer politics"—a chronic waffler taking his direction from pollsters and media spin-masters. From the left, he has earned two new sobriquets: Tory

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Blair and Tony Blur. The Conservative line on him has become a spiral of contradictory propositions: He is weak; he is tyrannical. He has duped the voters with his charm tactics; they will not be fooled, because those supporting him are really showing a preference for true conservatism. He has manipulated the Labour Party into serving his own ambition; Labour is completely unchanged and will swamp him in its misery in the end.

Biparty skepticism of Blair crystallized last November, when *The Spectator*, the high-Tory weekly, honored Roy Hattersley at its Parliamentarian of the Year luncheon. Hattersley, a leader of the Labour right for decades, has lately taken to defending the old ideals against the new pragmatism. (He wistfully inscribed his recently published memoir to an old friend with a reference to the Labour Party victory of half a century ago: "From one man of '45 to another.") The seemingly odd pairing of conservative host and socialist guest suited both, for the object of their scorn was the dreaded Blairism. At the luncheon, Hattersley decried the state of his party at length. It had been turned, he claimed, into "less of a moral crusade and more of a marketing exercise."

A year earlier, David Hare had presented "The Absence of War," his play about the Labour Party's identity crisis. (He had been allowed to roam freely inside the 1992 campaign.) Hare depicted a party held captive to a psychology of self-defeat, in which confidence was undermined by the feeling that ideals were being sacrificed to political strategy and that any move forward registered as disloyalty to the hallowed past. In the final scene, to the fading strains of Elgar's "Enigma" Variations, the losing Labour leader speaks of the strangled death of hope:

> My own mother died. She died in an air-raid. In South London, during the blitz. It's almost my very first memory, my aunts weeping as they gave me the news. And since then . . . fifty years' honest endeavor. Fifty years doing my best. Being told everything I love and value no longer meets the needs of the day.

Reaction to the play from Labour Party leaders ranged, according to Hare, from public hostility to private approval. Kinnock himself attended a performance. "Neil was incredibly gracious," Hare said. "He said it was a horrendous experience for him to sit through."

Modernization by definition demanded a leader who advanced without feeling that he was leaving behind his true self.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ANTHONY CHARLES LYNTON BLAIR was born in Edinburgh in 1953, the second son of Leo Blair, a barrister, and Hazel McLay, a housewife. Blair's middle names are a combination of the given and the stage names of Leo's biological father. Until the press began investigating Blair's personal background last year, he says he did not know that Leo had been born illegitimate and was raised by foster parents, or that Leo's real parents were music-hall entertainers. Leo Blair was brought up by a Glasgow shipyard worker and his wife, and as a young man he belonged to the Young Communist League. In the mid-fifties, Leo moved with his wife and sons to Adelaide, Australia, where he taught law for three years. Then the family moved to the industrial city of Durham, in northern England, where Leo became a successful lawyer and transformed himself into a Tory activist. In 1963, the self-made man sought a parliamentary seat as a Conservative, but he was hit by a stroke during the campaign and was left unable to speak for three years. Leo's illness devastated the family emotionally and financially.

At the age of thirteen, Tony was sent to Fettes, a traditionally Spartan boarding school in Edinburgh, where he rebelled against the authorities and grew his hair long. At St. John's College, Oxford, in the seventies, he was the lead singer in a rock band called Ugly Rumours, and gained distinction for his rendition of the Rolling Stones' "Live with Me." At Oxford, Blair was very social, but also earnest and studious. His thinking was heavily influenced by Peter Thomson, a graduate student in theology from Australia who was also an ordained Anglican priest. Blair joined Thomson's circle of post-Marxist, New Left searchers, and they introduced him to the works of the prewar Scottish theologian John Macmurray. In a country that is largely indifferent to religion, Blair is a practicing Anglican who has also embraced the communitarianism of the Christian-socialist tradition. Apart from attending two demonstrations against the neo-Fascist National Front, Blair was not politically active on campus, and he did not join the Labour Party. "That would have been regarded as terribly right-wing," he says. Membership was unfashionable, dull, the mark of a hack. It is rare, though, for someone to emerge later in life in the Labour leadership who did not begin the climb early.

In 1975, Blair graduated and moved to London. There a Labour elder prevailed upon him to join the Party's Chelsea ward. He was restless (his mother had

"Mr. Skelton, can I go out and play now?"

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died that year), and kicked around Paris for a few months, getting work as a barman and as an insurance clerk. Later that year, he decided to become a barrister—a career that requires acceptance into an apprenticeship, called a pupillage. In 1976, he presented an unimpressive résumé at the law chambers of Alexander Irvine, Q.C., whose best friend, since his days at Glasgow University, was John Smith, then the youngest minister in the Callaghan Cabinet.

"My first impression was of colossal enthusiasm, determination, and charm," Irvine says of Blair, but Irvine had already accepted a top graduate from the London School of Economics—a Labourite from Liverpool named Cherie Booth. "I had a firm view that I wasn't to take two pupils," Irvine says. "I hadn't done so before. He succeeded in persuading me he wanted to be my pupil—an important element in any sales pitch. One of his principal skills was absorbing enormously complicated material. Make your best points on the issues—he was very good at that." In 1980, Irvine's two pupils, now barristers, married. Cherie Booth came from a family of Catholic working-class Party activists (her father, Tony Booth, played a militant left-winger in the landmark television comedy "Till Death Us Do Part," which was exported to America as "All in the Family"), and she was professionally and politically ambitious. "They are a political household," Irvine says about the Blairs. "He will confide in her. It is undoubted. It's one of these marriages where they will almost naturally think as one."

"What about that! His brain still uses the old vacuum tubes."

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THE sequence of Labour's political march of folly had begun long before the dismal, strike-filled winter of 1978-79, which resulted in Margaret Thatcher's election as Prime Minister. Industrial disorder had been a major factor in bringing down the previous Conservative Government, of Edward Heath, in 1974, and Labour was defined more than ever by its relationship to the assertive unions, whose willingness to press their demands to the point of paralyzing Britain seemed contemptuous not only of public order but of the economic condition of a nation facing an inflationary surge. Callaghan was the quintessential Labour leader, born into the working class and bred in the Party incubator—a "keeper of the cloth cap." He was of the Labour right, but his policy was to play left against right to sustain himself in the middle. He could not control the union leadership, however. The more the unions acted out, the more impotent Callaghan appeared and the more the Labour Party itself was rejected as inimical to governing. Callaghan's defeat was a statement about the pathology of a party that allowed Margaret Thatcher to rule for eleven years without ever winning a popular majority.

The Conservatives won with 43.9 per cent to Labour's thirty-seven; they had a forty-three-vote majority in the six-hundred-and-thirty-five-member House of Commons. Since it was the Labour right that had lost power, the Labour left argued that it should be allowed to implement its mandate. Much of the leadership of the right split off with great fanfare to launch a new political party, the Social Democrats, and for a while it was the most popular party in the country. (It splintered in several directions, though, and by 1989 it had vanished.) Tony and Cherie Blair, who did not abandon Labour, found themselves in a hive of factional conflict in which they opposed the far left.

Within the Party, the trade unions could no longer muster their former support, and a vacuum was filled by contentious left-wing groups. "When the old blocs of Labour declined," Blair says, "they were supplanted by interest groups, and the result of that was that a committee would set itself up calling itself the race committee and decide your race policy, or a women's committee would decide your women's policy, and an environment committee would decide your environment policy, and before you know it what you have is a conglomeration of policies that do not appeal to the broad mass of the country at all."

In 1979, Blair told Alexander Irvine, who was well connected in the Party, that he wanted to stand for Parliament. Irvine introduced him to Smith, and

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SKETCHBOOK · BY FRANÇOIS BERTHOUD

THE LAST RUN

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Blair wrote a brief for him against the Conservatives' privatization schemes. In 1982, Blair ran his first race, in a by-election in Beaconsfield, which was a Conservative stronghold in Buckinghamshire. (He was selected, as every candidate is, by a local Party committee. Residence in the constituency is not required, and candidates shop around for favorable sites.) He gained publicity as a fresh face for Labour, but the election took place just weeks after Thatcher led Britain into the Falklands War. Blair finished third, gaining only ten per cent of the vote. The following year, he and Cherie made plans to run for separate seats. He did not have a good district, and he felt his hopes ebbing. "I could see everything disappearing," he told a BBC interviewer. Irvine advised him to wait for the right opportunity, and Blair reluctantly followed his advice. At his thirtieth-birthday party, he felt that his political career had ended before it began. But a week later a newly redrawn seat opened up in the safe Labour constituency of Sedgefield, in northeast England. "I remember Tony ringing up from the hall after he had been selected, with cheers ringing in the background," Irvine says.

Blair was elected handily, but Cherie was defeated in her bid. Over all, the election of 1983 was a shattering loss for Labour, and especially for the left wing. The Party had run on a program of unilateral nuclear disarmament and extensive nationalizations—the longest suicide note in political history, it was widely called. Labour received 27.6 per cent of the vote; the Tories, who won with 42.4 per cent, now had a hundred-and-forty-four-seat majority. (The Liberals and the Social Democrats, in an alliance, won 25.4 per cent.)

The shock of 1983 eradicated the left-right schism within the Party but did not fill the vacuum. The Labour right had ushered the tormenting Thatcher into office and had done nothing to reform the Party internally, and now its leaders were either fretting or defecting. The left had accelerated Labour's fracturing. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, the hard left's great romantic, who had given up his peerage to become Tony Benn, M.P., went down to glorious, exemplary defeat in his constituency. The socialist intellectual Michael Foot, who had been ill cast as Party leader, resigned. Neil Kinnock succeeded him.

MODERNIZATION could not consist of the triumph of one discredited side or the other; rather, it required the recasting of the Party as a whole. Essentially, this amounted to a generational shift in leadership. In the House of Commons, Blair shared a small office with another young new member, Gordon Brown. A former chairman of the Scottish Labour Party, Brown had a brilliant mind and was, like Blair, thinking through the problem of remaking the Party. They had been mobilized by the 1983 debacle, and soon they became the advance guard of the "Kinnocracy"—spokesmen for the commitment to reform. They hatched what they sometimes describe as the Project: an effort to strip first the Labour Party, and then Britain, of nostalgia.

There was another figure who entered into the Project at this juncture, and he has since become perhaps the most influential politico within the Labour Party. In 1985, in anticipation of an election two years hence, and in an effort to counter the devastating campaigns devised by the Saatchis, Kinnock appointed Peter Mandelson, a former producer at London Weekend Television, as the Party's communications director. Mandelson is of the same generation as Blair and Brown, and is close to both of them. He was at Oxford at the time Blair was, and he had always been interested in politics. His grandfather was Herbert Morrison, who served as president of the London County Council and as Clement Attlee's Deputy Prime Minister. Mandelson believes that his grandfather was denied the Prime Ministership through internal Party wrangling, and admits that he is seeking in some way to vindicate his memory. Mandelson, who knows everybody in the media and in politics, is sinuous and sophisticated. He has become the focus of scorn for those opposed to the Project—the evil genie behind it all.

Mandelson orchestrated frequent media appearances for Blair and Brown to attack Tory policies. He hired Hugh Hudson, the director of "Chariots of Fire," to produce a soaring biographical spot about Kinnock. And he replaced the Party's traditional symbol, the red flag, with a red rose, a symbol borrowed from European Social Democratic parties. That act won him the nickname Red Rose Pete. In 1987, Labour lost again, gaining only 30.8 per cent of the vote. Yet Blair believes that a turn was made in that election: "Peter masterminded the Labour Party's 1987 campaign, which we lost, but were it not for him and Neil Kinnock waging a brilliant campaign we would have ended up going out of business."

In the following years, Blair, who was shuttling between shadow Cabinet posts, openly admired Thatcher for her political fortitude and clarity. "The key to Mrs. Thatcher's political success has been in destroying and re-creating contours of electoral support," he wrote in *The New Statesman*. Privately, he came to believe that Kinnock was not pressing modernization fast enough and that, despite Labour's initial lead in the polls at the beginning of the 1992 race, the Party was likely to lose. "It was winnable, but it was only winnable if the Labour Party was perceived to be a transformed political party," Blair says. "And it wasn't. . . . I was angry in the '92 election because people didn't trust Labour. The Conservatives now think that they won it by their strategy, but I think we lost it." The Conservatives won with 41.9 per cent to Labour's 34.2; the Tory majority was twenty-one seats. In the purging ritual, Neil Kinnock resigned, and John Smith was elected leader. While some columnists wondered if Labour should have skipped a generation and made Blair leader, he had hesitated to become Smith's deputy in the race, and that prize went to a dour Party traditionalist, Margaret Beckett. Blair regretted his own passivity, and determined not to make the same mistake again.

THOUGH Kinnock had lost, Bill Clinton had won. For Blair and the modernizers, this was a sign that they, too, might be redeemed. In January, 1993, Blair and Gordon Brown travelled to Washington to meet with members of the new Administration and learn how they had won. They returned to rumblings from the Labour traditionalists, who accused them of seeking to perpetrate "Clintonization" on

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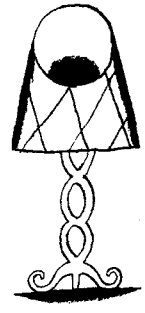
the Party. Blair was now shadow Home Secretary, assigned the task of neutralizing the Tories' tough position on crime. He had to defend Labour from the charge of softness without echoing the Conservatives' draconian policy. Blair honed his position into a quotable phrase: "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime." He travelled to Washington again, this time to learn how the Clinton Administration had overcome the once prohibitive political advantage the Republicans had on the crime issue. He expected to be fencing for years with the Tories on volatile social issues and then, at last, if John Smith should win, to become Home Secretary.



Smith's patience seemed an asset, an antidote to Kinnock's chippiness. When Major's popularity began to plummet, Smith adopted the attitude of King Log, simply waiting for events to occur. An aide called it "the long game," but it was less a strategy than a reflection of Smith's temperament. Under pressure from Blair and his allies at the 1993 Party conference, Smith pushed for and won what was called "one member, one vote," or OMOV: a reduction of the percentage of the bloc vote granted to the trade unions in determining the Party's leadership, and an increase in the constituency members' influence. But Smith rejected use of the phrase New Labour and any alteration of the Party's written charter, and he banished Peter Mandelson, openly disdaining "the black art of public relations." Blair worried that Smith would not press for any further reforms.

By the afternoon of the day of Smith's death, May 12, 1994, Blair had decided he would run for leader, even though it meant challenging his friend Gordon Brown, whose ambition had always been to lead the Party. The race between Blair and Brown was a phony campaign, a contest between political brothers which didn't involve fratricide. Brown assembled his team, delivered one public speech, and quickly concluded he could not win. Blair, for his part, pressed forward, and thereby gained strength. So, after a dinner at a fashionable Islington restaurant with Blair, Brown ended his bid before ever announcing it. "There was no struggle," Brown told me tersely. Brown, not admitting that he was wounded, appeared statesmanlike; Blair appeared impregnable. Blair faced two traditionalists, Margaret Beckett and the Scotsman John Prescott, and won easily.

"I would hesitate to say Tony was lucky because my friend Smith died, but in the brutal political sense he was lucky," Alexander Irvine, Blair's mentor, says. "To be clinical about it, despite the fact that Gordon has a major intellect, and projects it as such, the overriding image would have been Another Worthy Scotsman. That might have forced attention on the predominance of Scots in the Labour Party and the extent to which Labour had become marginalized to its strongest point. That was the negative case for Gordon. The positive case for Tony is that he's fantastically good news at the box office."

Upon his election as leader, Blair told Philip Gould, Labour's top political consultant, that he was "not going to fudge any decisions in relation to the Party," explaining that the concept was "to produce New Labour." Three months later, in October of 1994, in Blackpool, Blair appeared at his first Party conference as leader, against a backdrop of a new banner, which read, "New Labour, New Britain." In a speech he said, "Let us say what we mean and mean what we say." Then he announced a sweeping and historically resonant act: Labour's charter would be rewritten. He was proposing nothing less than stripping the temple of its holy of holies—expunging its Clause IV. This clause was not mere words but a religious credo, engraved on the back of membership cards: "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." Clause IV was a summons to the socialist Jerusalem.

Credited to the Fabian socialist Sidney Webb, Clause IV had been adopted in 1918, as a right-revisionist response to the Bolshevik Revolution. But it had become a sacred text for the left. For decades—ever since Hugh Gaitskell briefly entertained the notion of changing it, in 1959—Labour leaders, including Kinnock and Smith, had veered away from the trouble that change might cause. "It was an ancient shibboleth, and people used to say, 'O.K., let's not touch it,' " Blair says. "And my argument against that was if we're going to prove to people that the Labour Party is changed and is genuinely a value-based party, not a party that still has within its constitution a quasi-Marxist figment of ideology, then we should have the courage to just go out and change it. If in truth we can't change it, then there is something pretty fundamentally wrong with the way we are." At the Party conference, a vote was taken on whether to affirm Clause IV. It passed by 50.9 per cent to 49.1: the largest trade unions opposed a change. For six months, Blair stumped Party halls around the country for a spring vote, and as a result he won this one resoundingly. "Now, that was a bit like breaking a spell," he says.

"Few politicians are good at taking the high ground and throwing themselves off it," observed Mandelson, who had tried a decade earlier to deal with Clause IV by stealth—by simply neglecting to have it printed on the back of the membership cards. "Tony does it, and takes enormous care to bring everyone else behind him. He manages the process of risk taking with great application to detail."

BLAIR has gathered around him a fairly close-knit if eclectic circle of aides and advisers, all devoted to him and the Project as one cause. His oldest friend in the group is Anji Hunter, whom he met when they were both teen-age school rebels. As his "personal political adviser," she runs the office, serves as a liaison to other Members of Parliament and leaders of the Party, and speaks to Blair perhaps dozens of times a day. Jonathan Powell, the chief of staff, was drawn not from the ranks of the Party but from the Foreign Service. He was First Secretary at the British Embassy in Washington—the link between it and the Clinton Administration. His brother, Sir Charles Powell, was the foreign-policy and defense adviser to Thatcher, and was often referred to as the Deputy Prime Minis-

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ter. Alastair Campbell, a personal friend, with whom the Blair family sometimes vacations, was the aggressive political editor of the tabloid *Daily Mirror* until last year, and is now Blair's press secretary. Peter Mandelson, who had become an M.P. for Hartlepool, was promoted to the front bench in the Commons, a place that publicly acknowledges his influence. Alexander Irvine is relied upon for his judgment, and if Blair wins he will almost certainly become the Lord Chancellor, overseeing the nation's judicial system. Philip Gould, who analyzes the polling and develops themes, spent the fall of 1992 in the Clinton campaign's war room in Little Rock. Meanwhile, Gordon Brown has made his peace with Blair, and has become the most important member of the shadow Cabinet, in charge of economic strategy.

The rise of Blair's kitchen Cabinet has stirred some resentment among the traditionalists, but Blair has muted these feelings by choosing as his deputy his onetime rival John Prescott. Prescott is a classic Labour leader, a former ship's steward who rose through the ranks. He is bluff, candid, and fearless, and is now a Blair loyalist.

THE Project is, of course, as much a reaction to the long legacy of Conservative rule as it is to Labour's fecklessness. If Thatcher is the stepmother to Major, she is also the midwife to Blair. By creating conditions that forced changes in the Labour Party, she helped bring him forward as its leader. But it is what she has done to the Conservative Party that has made it possible for Blair to become Prime Minister.

The Tory political tradition was patrician, imperial, and designed to conserve the existing social order. Since Benjamin Disraeli warned against turning Britain into a battlefield of opposing classes in "Sybil, or The Two Nations," the novel he wrote in 1845, his fusion of patriotism and paternalism has defined one-nation Toryism. Disraeli's vision, rooted in feudalism, was of an organic society of which the Conservative Party was the political expression. Its aim was to balance the classes and preserve established institutions. He justified reforms to improve the conditions of the working class as essential to social cohesion. The hero of Disraeli's novel delivers a parliamentary speech (echoing one that Disraeli actually gave) addressed to the aristocracy: "If you wished for time to retain your political power, you could only effect your purpose by securing for the people greater social felicity."

Conservatism, of course, never reconciled the classes or the regional disparities in the United Kingdom. Margaret Thatcher's reaction to this problem was to adopt a radical right-wing philosophical position against the very idea of one nation. Thatcher's mesmerizing strength as a "conviction politician" battered down the old Toryism. Her brand of postimperial nostalgia consisted of exalting the imperial individual as if "society" were another word for Soviet socialism. There was considerable to-do when she said that "there is no such thing as society," only individuals and families. She disdained those who invoked the injustices of class as whiners lacking the grit to go into business. She heaped scorn on one-nation Toryism as the blithering of yesterday's men: the "feeble" and "timid" public-school weaklings and appeasers of statism, as she put it in her memoir. With an intense belief in her own righteousness, she split the Conservative Party and orphaned the paternalistic one-nation idea that had been the ideological fundament of the Party for more than a century.

Will Hutton, the economics editor of the pro-Labour newspaper the *Guardian*, offered a sharp critique of the consequences of Thatcherism last year in his book "The State We're In." Hutton described a society increasingly riven by class, socially less cohesive, and politically more centralized. "Indeed," he concluded, "the crisis of Conservatism is more deep-seated and threatening to its internal cohesion than is commonly recognized."

ONLY three Prime Ministers in this century have served longer than John Major: H. H. Asquith, Harold Macmillan, and Margaret Thatcher. Yet his impact has been nearly invisible. Major's unpopularity is of a strange variety, born of a lack of strong feelings. He is neither loved nor hated. When he became the Prime Minister, he promised, in the wake of Thatcher's

"Am I doing something wrong? You don't say 'Good dog' to me anymore."

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Sturm und Drang, a nation "at ease with itself." But his ineffectuality has only rarely allowed him to strike the pose of a man at ease.

In September, 1992, five months after Major's surprise election victory, the pound sterling crashed out of the European exchange-rate mechanism. Black Wednesday, as it was called, severely challenged the assumption that the Conservatives were the most competent economic stewards. (Black Wednesday also triggered revolts within the Party over joining Europe.) Since then, Major has been swamped by endless factional battles, botched initiatives, and private scandals throughout the ranks of his party, but in July of last year he proved his political will to survive by forcing a vote on his leadership. He was opposed only by John Redwood, a right-wing backbencher, whose slogan was "No Change, No Chance," and whose program included halting the decommissioning of the royal yacht, Britannia. Major won easily, insuring his position as Prime Minister until the next election. But he had drained the Tories of possibility: he was all that was left.

With great alacrity, Blair captured the center ground the Conservatives had lost by redefining the idea of one nation. Thatcherism has given him his opportunity to prove the relevance of his Christian socialism and to make the case that social cohesion can be gained by means other than an aristocratic paternalism or an unfettered market. His one-nation politics also enables him to lift the taint from Labour as a sectarian, class-bound movement.

In a series of speeches beginning last October at Labour's party conference in Brighton, Blair openly developed his one-nation concept. "One nation," as he defines it, means restoring a sense of community, and can be achieved only by overcoming class. "I want us to be a young country again," he said, adding a new spin on jingoism. "Not resting on past glories. Not fighting old battles . . . Not saying, 'This was a great country.' But 'Britain can and will be a great country again.' " In a foreign-policy speech on November 30th, Blair accused the Tory right of being "the Little Englander party, content to be on the margins of Europe and often, as over Bosnia . . . isolationist." Britain, he said, can only be "strong in the world because we are cohesive at home, and strong in Europe. . . . Britain as one nation."

After spending Christmas in Australia, Blair went to Singapore, where, on January 8th, he delivered a speech to the business community, declaring his commitment to "one-nation politics" and proposing to make everyone "stakeholders." The welfare system would be reformed to serve as a program to enable people to enter the labor force as skilled workers. The "sharing of the possibility of power, wealth, and opportunity" would not rest on "the tax and benefit regime." But dealing with a global economy requires an active government that engages the market by spurring savings and making public investments, especially in education. Citizens, he went on, are not simply widgets but stakeholders where they work. The modern corporation, he argued, should be seen not as "a mere vehicle for the capital market" but as "a community or partnership." Rights and responsibilities extend throughout the society, from top to bottom. That speech (inspired in part by Will Hutton's book) has provoked an intense debate over the new ideological fault lines he has drawn.

A political token of the redefinition of "one-nation politics" came in October with the unprecedented defection of Alan Howarth, the former Tory Minister of Education, from the Conservative to the Labour side. "I'm a one-nation man, not a class warrior," Howarth told me. "Tony's values in politics are very much mine. Each move in the Conservative Party is more to the right. The world outside recognized that the best Thatcher did is shared wisdom—goodbye to the big central state. But the world also recognizes unrestrained market forms will destroy all relationships. You need to sustain the cohesion of society. The Tory Party hasn't adjusted. Major's sole aim is to keep the Tory Party in office. It's not obvious what he wants to do except survive. Major is increasingly a prisoner of the right wing of his party."

THE Conservative Party's internal divisions have so far made it impossible for it to develop a coherent

AT THE GALLERIES

THE ART OF THE BRONTËS

WHEN Charlotte Brontë was nine, she and her sister Emily, who was six, were recalled from the Cowan Bridge School; their two older sisters, who had contracted tuberculosis there, had returned home before them to die. Under the tutelage of a remote father and a maiden aunt (their mother had died four years earlier), the sisters, together with their two remaining siblings, Branwell and Anne, spent their childhood in celebrated isolation at Haworth Parsonage, with one view from the house taking in the vast sweep of the moors and the other the graveyard.

The children's profound sense of loss, their powerful imaginative gifts, and their almost exclusive reliance on one another's company gave rise to an extraordinary collective creative mania. They began by reading everything in the house, from "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Paradise Lost" to Goldsmith's "A Grammar of General Geography" and *Blackwood's Magazine*—a monthly miscellany of satires and reviews of contemporary politics and literature, which, in turn, inspired them to create imaginary worlds of their own. Over time, these worlds evolved into the politically and socially complex kingdoms of Angria and Gondal, which absorbed them well into adulthood. The Brontës fashioned matchbox-size facsimiles of *Blackwood's* in microscopic script, and wrote their own plays and stories in minuscule books made from scraps of paper, sugar bags, and wallpaper. (In "Angria and the Angrians," Branwell compressed twenty-five hundred words onto a five-by-seven-inch page that bears an uncanny resemblance to the obsessive abstract lettering of Charles Crumb's last cartoons.) "The Art of the Brontës," at the Morgan Library through April 14th, offers a sampling of these manuscripts, together with some of the remarkable illustrations by Charlotte and Branwell that accompany them. Also on display are Emily's beautiful watercolor of her dog Keeper and Anne's feathery pencil sketches of trees and of a forlorn girl in the woods. —MARY HAWTHORNE

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Charlotte Brontë's watercolor portrait of the King of Angria, painted when she was seventeen.

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"No, I don't. And I'll tell you why."

• •

strategy against Blair, or even to gauge the seriousness of the threat he poses. Two mutually exclusive strategies reflect the split within the Party. The right's approach is called "clear blue water." It means that the Conservatives ought to be creating sharp differences between themselves and Labour by moving farther right. The other approach, that of the remnant of one-nation Tories, is called simply "Coke." It means that the Conservatives ought to emphasize that they, not the deceptively positioned Labour, are at the true center of the country, that they are "the real thing." Some on the right see their best chance for power not in a Major victory and a prolongation of his regime but in his defeat, followed by a Blair Government they believe they could discredit, after which the field would be cleared for them. This strategy might be called "Gingrich." John Redwood, Major's challenger from the right, travelled to Washington in September and again last month to discuss this third way with Newt Gingrich himself and his pollster, Frank Luntz, who devised the Contract with America. "Gingrich would say, paradoxically, [that the Republicans'] losing the Presidency made it easier for him—to that extent he benefitted from the Bush defeat," Redwood told me. "Our party is still in power. My argument is that we can avoid defeat, stick to our principles."

Still others in the Conservative camp believe that Blair has yet to face real tests. "Don't forget, Tony Blair is just in a honeymoon," says Shaun Woodward, who was the communications director for the Conservative Party in its last campaign. "He has to manage the Labour Party. Management is not an easy game. And nobody should underestimate Major. His critics say he can't clear the hurdle, but he does. He wins. Underestimate this man at your peril." Charles Moore, of the *Daily Telegraph*, noted, "The Tories are ruthless in elections. That ought to be enough. If I were a Tory propagandist, I'd repeat—you have to repeat—'Tony Blair is the leader of the Labour Party, a bad vehicle for running the country.' The press is terribly important. If the jackals of the right-wing press go after Blair, the fear thing will really get going. Terror will be struck in the hearts of middle England."

The question for Blair is not whether the mostly Conservative press will support him but whether it will rabidly oppose him. Much speculation centers on Rupert Murdoch, who owns the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, *News of the World*, the *Sun* (the largest tabloid), and Sky-TV. In the past, his media were powerful instruments in the Tory cause. But, Moore says, "Murdoch might play a double game. Murdoch's a total cynic. Maybe Blair will prevent the onslaught."

Last July, Murdoch invited Blair to address executives at his NewsCorp Leadership Conference on Hayman Island, off the Great Barrier Reef, in Australia. Blair has met with Murdoch several times since. It is not so much sympathy for the devil as a tactic to blunt or forestall him. "The press has certainly become far more even in its handling of us," Blair says. "They went after Neil Kinnock ferociously, ferociously. Really, they got to the stage where it was really pretty grotesque propaganda. At the moment, anyway, that has not reëmerged."

Operationally, Labour is attaining parity. The Party is currently spending two million pounds to acquire two floors of a building near the House of Commons, for an up-to-date media center. But the glimmering of success is unfamiliar to Labour, and Blair's progress still arouses disquiet. "There's tremendous admiration, tremendous enthusiasm, but not much trust," one leader of the Labour left in Parliament told me. "So long as the show is rolling along in a successful way, he's got no problem. But the cost of his failure could be very high."

Blair's modernization of the Labour Party is a test run for the larger, harder part of the Project: modernizing Britain. England is not Greece to America's Rome, as Harold Macmillan suggested it would become. England has become England to America's Rome, an outlying country of

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often amusing people best appreciated for their dramatic art of self-presentation. "The real challenge to Britons is to succeed in the modern global economy—the proper relation of markets and public action," Gordon Brown says. "Tony has proved how Labour is capable of transforming the Party. Now we must have a modern view of Britain's place in the world. The battle is one to establish the agenda."

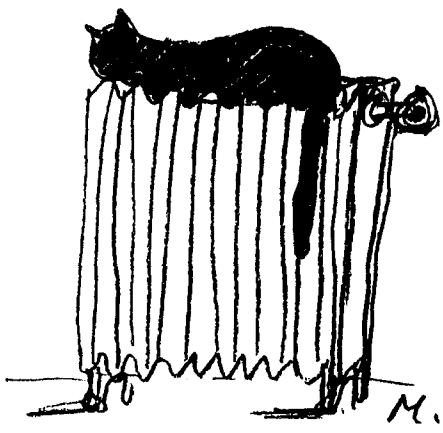
Thatcher's task in presenting her view of Britannia Restored was simplified by the Cold War and Labour's antinuclear pacifism. Britain, under her reign, was holding the line of containment, and was, ipso facto, strong. The crushing of the Argentines in the Falklands War gave an adrenaline rush to the idea that Britain was a muscular power. Thatcher's real fear was Europe. In time, she split the Tories over it, and the Party remains heavily weighted toward the "Euro-skeptics," who include Major. And there is, among the public, a pervasive anxiety that Britain, the foremost great power at the beginning of the century, is now weak and backward compared with Europe. (According to Gordon Brown's own new figures, the country has now fallen behind Italy in per-capita income.) But Blair believes that the policy of muddling through, without full engagement in Europe, must lead to further decline and might even fray the Anglo-American special relationship.

On November 29th, Air Force One landed in London. Clinton's relations with John Major had begun on a badly strained note. In the fall of 1992, operatives from the Tory central office had parachuted into Washington like commandos in a desperate, doomed attempt to rescue the campaign of George Bush; meanwhile, the Home Office searched for material that would prove that Clinton had engaged in unpatriotic acts while protesting the Vietnam War as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. But now, in Westminster, standing before the entire Parliament, the President praised John Major, who, silently but visibly, mouthed the words "Thank you."

Then Clinton went to see Blair. They tested themes on each other that they would later use in key speeches: Blair's "stakeholder society" address and Clinton's State of the Union. The main problem was social insecurity, and there was only so much change people could take at one time. Clinton said that he had focussed his energies on legislative achievements to the neglect of communicating with the public. Blair replied that Thatcher and Reagan had been able to get out their messages more successfully. He said that left-of-center parties faced particular problems in this respect, partly because commentators often failed to understand what they were about. In the absence of an intellectual movement, the vacuum was being filled by cynicism and disillusion. Clinton said that it was not possible to win voters in favor of big government anymore, an idea he finally expressed in public in his State of the Union address. He said that the larger themes should be liberty, progress, and unity. Blair observed that the age of overarching initiatives like Britain's Beveridge Plan, which had inaugurated the welfare state in 1945, was over. Implicit in this exploratory discussion was the intention of both sides to set the Anglo-American special relationship on a new basis: the Transatlantic Project.

Blair and his circle believe that Clinton's reëlection is a crucial factor for them. "Clinton win? Not important," a deadpan Peter Mandelson told me. "Nothing. No effect." Then he started biting all his nails at once and shaking. A Clinton defeat would be seen in Britain as an augury for Blair. A Clinton victory would make Major appear hopelessly retrograde and give Blair a sense of inevitability.

Blair believes that the difficulties Clinton has encountered are far less personal than political in character, and that, therefore, the American experience might foreshadow the resistance he will meet. Any change from a long-established regime is bound to stir up a fervent opposition. Blair's polling has already detected in the electorate a reactionary populist nationalism simmering beneath the surface, which might find a focus for its rage in an incumbent Labour Government. But, whatever their similarities, Clinton and Blair operate in very different political systems. Blair in power would not be checked and balanced; with a certain majority, he could propose and dispose. The experiment that Clinton proposed at the beginning of his Administration, but which was frustrated, therefore might be tested first in Blair's Britain. Then Blair would face the true crisis of transition: coping with a politics of raised expectations while instituting programs that would not immediately lift living standards. "Probably the most important thing is that I don't think any project such as this becomes clear to the public until you are in government and you're doing things," he told me.



Blair had expected that Britain's election would be held in 1997, after America's. But in December one Conservative Member of Parliament died and another defected to the Liberal-Democrat Party. Pro-European Tories claimed that there might be more defections if the Party didn't steer away from the right. The leader of the Party's right, Defense Minister Michael Portillo, a Thatcher protégé, dared them to leave. A group of old-line Tories announced that they were going to write their own one-nation manifesto. Margaret Thatcher weighed in with a blast at them as "no-nation conservatives" and at Major for being insufficiently right-wing. Studying actuarial charts and the Party's widening schisms, Major privately ordered the central office to prepare battle plans for a potential campaign within six months. But Major has embraced no strategy. He seems to be planning on winning a mandate for entropy.

Tony Blair, sitting in a green-leather armchair in the Office of the Opposition Leader in the House of Commons, is at ease yet impatient. "If not now, when?" he asks. ♦

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PERSONAL HISTORY

THIS WILD DARKNESS

BY HAROLD BRODKEY
(OCTOBER 25, 1930-JANUARY 26, 1996)

I am practicing making entries in my journal, to record my passage into nonexistence. This identity, this mind, this particular cast of speech, is nearly over.

IT starts in my sleep, a partly dreamed memory of being young and about to wake to the life of a young man. This morning I was playing basketball with Michael Jordan, and I was as big as he was, or bigger. What a mass of roles, of personae, is mixed in when one is ill, alongside the self-loathing and self-protection, the recurring simplicity and the terror. My identity is as a raft skidding or gliding, borne on a flux of feelings and frights, including the morning's delusion (which lasts ten minutes sometimes) of being young and whole.

Being ill like this combines shock—*this time I will die*—with a pain and agony that are unfamiliar, that wrench me out of myself. It is like visiting one's funeral, like visiting loss in its purest and most monumental form, this wild darkness, which is not only unknown but which one cannot enter as oneself. Now one belongs entirely to nature, to time: identity was a game. It isn't cruel what happens next, it is merely a form of being caught. Memory, so complete and clear or so evasive, has to be ended, has to be put aside, as if one were leaving a chapel and bringing the prayer to an end in one's head. It is death that goes down to the center of the earth, the great burial church the earth is, and then to the curved ends of the universe, as light is said to do.

CALL it the pit, the melodramatic pit: the bottomless danger in the world is bottomed with blood and the end of consciousness. Yet I don't wake angry or angrily prepared to fight or to accuse. (Somehow I was always short of rage. I had a ferocity and will but without rage. I often thought men stank of rage; it is why I preferred women, and homosexuals.) I awake with a not entirely sickened knowledge that I am merely young again and in a funny way at peace, an observer who is aware of time's chariot, aware that some metamorphosis has occurred.

I am in an adolescence in reverse, as mysterious as the first, except that this time I feel it as a decay of the odds that I might live for a while, that I can sleep it off. And as an alteration of language: I can't say *I will see you this summer.* I can't live without pain, and the strength I draw on throughout the day is Ellen's. At times I cannot entirely believe I ever was alive, that I ever was another self, and wrote—and loved or failed to love. I do not really understand this erasure. Oh, I can comprehend a shutting down, a great power replacing me with someone else (and with silence), but this inability to have an identity in the face of death—I don't believe I ever saw this written about in all the death scenes I have read or in all the descriptions of old age. It is curious how my life has tumbled to this point, how my memories no longer apply to the body in which my words are formed.

Almost the first thing I did when I became ill was to buy a truly good television set. Pop culture is unbearable when it is not superlatively presented in all its dexterities and grandeurs.

It's hard to know, when one has invented a term ironically, whether it is already full-fledged jargon—at any rate, I am nowadays exceedingly fond of the term "stress management." Stress management means nearly total irresponsibility: a sleeping pill every night, endless television (superlatively presented), answering mail only when I feel worldly or sociable. It's an ancient adolescence, and a male-diva thing . . . *Look, I'm dying* . . .

The procession of pills: two Advil, one 3TC, one AZT, one Paxil this morning, and last night a pentamidine treatment while I was drenched from night sweats. It is the bodily weakness and my own sense of ignorance that form the pit of blackness and fill me with impatient dread. The needle has replaced the kiss. Death and I are head to head in a total collision, pure and mutual distaste. Death does not want someone who has begun to taste of medication and is bloated and blurred. (Fat and pale—and then for a time wildly pink and purple from the medicines—and dandruffy, I am physically intellectual, finally.) But death's acquisitive instincts will win. I feel death as dirt closing over me.

Perhaps you could say I did very little with my life, but the *douceur*, if that is the word, Talleyrand's word, was overwhelming. Painful and light-struck and wonderful.

I have thousands of opinions still—but that is down from millions—and, as always, I know nothing.

I don't know if the darkness is growing inward or if I am dissolving, softly exploding outward, into constituent bits in other existences: micro-existence. I am sensible of the velocity of the moments, and entering that part of my head alert to the motion of the world I am aware that life was never perfect, never absolute. This bestows contentment, even a fearlessness. Separation, detachment, death. I look upon another's insistence on the merits of his or her life—duties, intellect, accomplishment—and see that most of it is nonsense. And me, hell, I am a genius or I am a fraud, or—as I really think—I am possessed by voices and events from the earliest edge of memory and have never existed except as an Illinois front yard where these things play themselves out over and over again until I die.

It bothers me that I won't live to see the end of the century, because, when I was young, in St. Louis, I remember saying to Marilyn, my sister by adoption, that that was how long I wanted to live: seventy years. And then to see the celebration. I remember the real light in the room; I say real because it is not dream light. Marilyn is very pretty, with a bit of self-display, and chubby,

Harold Brodkey, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, May 17, 1994.

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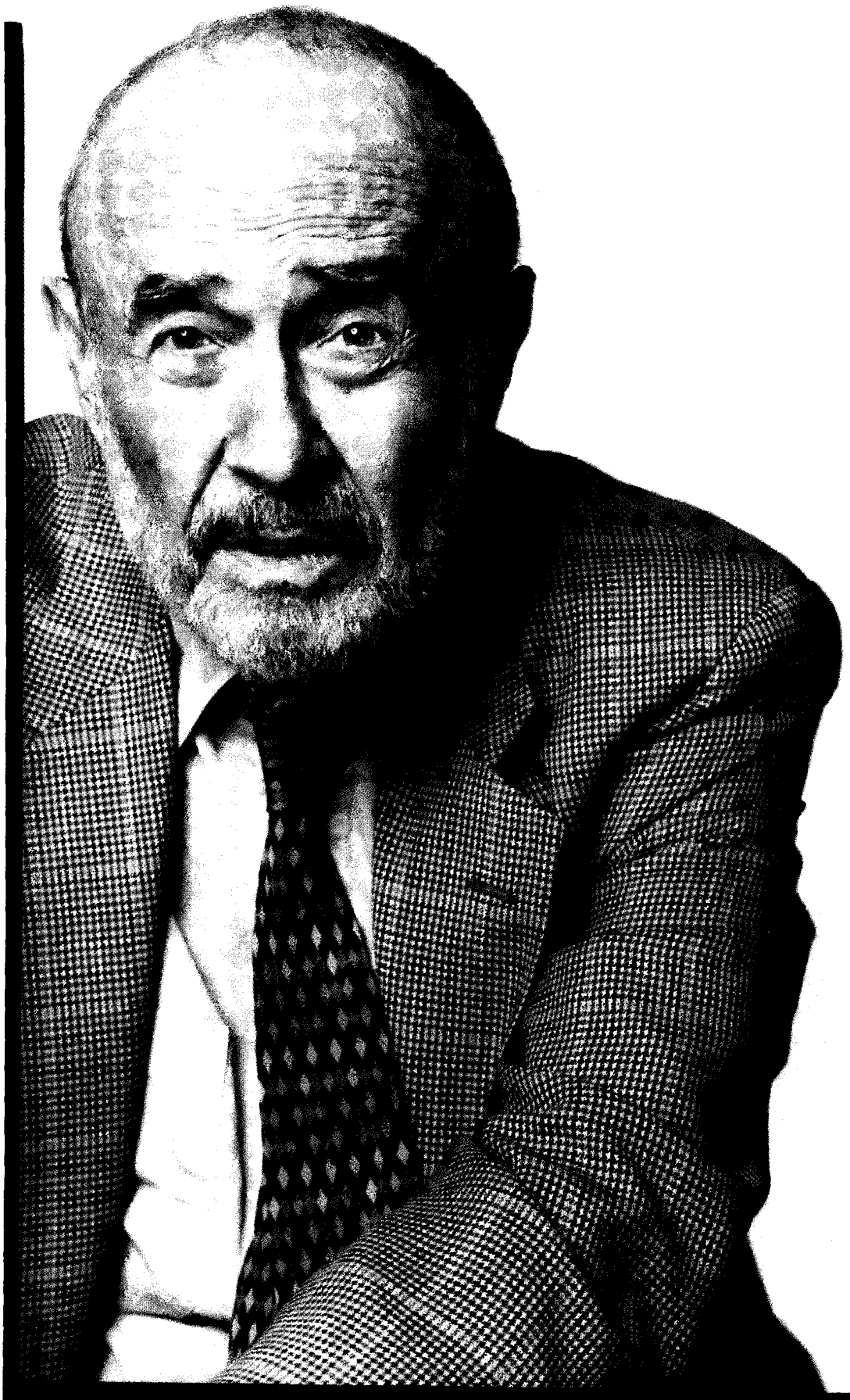

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and she does not ever want to be old like Gramma. If she is alive, she would be in her seventies now; perhaps I would not recognize her on the street.

I asked everyone—I was six or seven years old—I mean everyone, the children at school, the teachers, women in the cafeteria, the parents of other children: How long do you want to live? I suppose the secret in the question was: What do you enjoy? Do you enjoy living? Would you try to go on living under any circumstances?

To the end of the century, I said when I was asked. Well, I won't make it.

TRUE stories, autobiographical stories, like some novels, begin long ago, before the acts in the account, before the birth of some of the people in the tale. So an autobiography about death should include, in my case, an account of European Jewry and of Russian and Jewish events—pogroms and flights and murders and the revolution that drove my mother to come here. (A family like mine, of rabbis, trailing across forty centuries, is a web of copulations involving half the world and its genetic traces, such that I, wandering in the paragraphs of myself, come upon shadows of Nuremburg, Hamburg, St. Petersburg.) So, too, I should write an invocation to America, to Illinois, to *corners* of the world, and to immigration, to nomadism, to women's pride, to lecheries, and, in some cases, to cautions. I should do a riff on the issues of social class as they combine with passionate belief and self-definition, a cadenza about those people who insist categorically that they, not society, not fixed notions, will define who they are. My life, my work, my feelings, my death reside with them.

MY own shadows, the light of New York, sometimes become too much now; I pull the shades. I have been drawing spaceships for my grandson. I like to think that in a little while perhaps Ellen and I will go again to the country.

IN New York one lives in the moment rather more than Socrates advised, so that at a party or alone in your room it will always be difficult to guess at the long-term worth of anything. When I first started coming to New York, I was at college at Harvard. This was six years after the end of the Second World War. New York didn't glitter then. There were no reflecting glass buildings but, rather, stone buildings that looked stiff-sided and had smallish windows that caught sun rays and glinted at twilight: rows of corseted, sequinned buildings. Driving through the streets in a convertible owned by a school friend's very rich mother, one was presented with a series of towering perspectives leaping up and fleeing backward like some very high stone-and-brick wake from the passage of one's head. Advertising flowed past, billboards and neon and window signs: an invitation to the end of loneliness. New York was raunchy with words. It was menacing and lovely, the foursquare perspectives trailing down the fat avenues, which were transformed in the dimming blue light of the dissolving workday. Overwhelming beauty and carelessness, the city then—one of the wonders of the world.

New York was the capital of American sexuality, the one place in America where you could get laid with some degree of sophistication, and so Peggy Guggenheim and André Breton had come here during the war, whereas Thomas Mann, who was shy, and Igor Stravinsky, who was pious, had gone to Los Angeles, which is the best place for voyeurs. I was always crazy about New York, dependent on it, scared of it—well, it *is* dangerous—but beyond that there was the pressure of being young and of not yet having done work you really liked, trademark work, breakthrough work. The trouble with the city's invitation was that you were aware you might not be able to manage: you might drown, you might fall off the train, whatever metaphor you preferred, before you did anything interesting. You would have wasted your life. One worked hard or not at all, and tried to withstand the constant demolishing judgment. One watched people scavenge for phrases in other people's talk—that hunt for ideas which is, sometimes, like picking up dead birds. One witnessed the reverse of glamour—that everyone is jealous. It is not a joke, the great clang of New York. It is the sound of brassy people at the party, at all the parties, pimping and doing favors and threatening and making gassy public statements and being modest and blackmailing and having dinner and going on later. (Renata Adler used to say you could get anyone to be disliked in New York merely by praising that person to someone nervous and competitive.) Literary talk in New York often announced itself as the best talk in America. People would say, "Harold, you are hearing the best in America tonight." It would be a cutthroat monologue, disposable wit in passing, practiced with a certain carelessness in regard to honesty. But then truth was not the issue, as it almost never is in New York.

I FEEL very well, and for a week now, as part of some mysterious cycle, I have felt very happy. The world still seems far away. And I hear each moment whisper as it slides along. And yet I am happy—even overexcited, quite foolish. But *happy*. It seems very strange to think one could enjoy one's death. Ellen has begun to laugh at this phenomenon. We know we are absurd, but what can we do? We are happy.

ME, my literary reputation is mostly abroad, but I am *anchored* here in New York. I can't think of any other place I'd rather die than here. I would like to do it in bed, looking out my window. The exasperation, discomfort, sheer physical and mental danger here are more interesting to me than the comfort anywhere else. I have a bed on a wooden platform—three steps up—and I lie nested at the window, from which I can see midtown and its changing parade of towers and light; birds flying past cast shadows on me, my face, my chest.

I can't change the past, and I don't think I would. I don't expect to be understood. I like what I've written, the stories and two novels. If I had to give up what I've written in order to be clear of this disease, I wouldn't do it.

ONE may be tired of the world—tired of the prayer-makers, the poem-makers, whose rituals are distracting and human and pleasant but worse than irritating because they have no reality—while reality itself remains very dear. One wants glimpses of the real. God is an immensity, while this disease, this death, which is in me, this small, tightly defined pedestrian event, is merely and perfectly real, without miracle—or instruction. I am standing on an unmoored raft, a punt moving on the flexing, flowing face of a river. It is precarious. I don't know what I am doing. The unknowing, the taut balance, the jolts and the instability spread in widening ripples through all my thoughts. Peace? There was never any in the world. But in the pliable water, under the sky, unmoored, I am travelling now and hearing myself laugh, at first with nerves and then with genuine amazement. It is all around me.

Harold Brodkey died last Friday at 4:30 A.M.

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Harold Brodkey, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, January 28, 1958.

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FICTION

ASK ME, ASK ME, ASK ME

BY RODDY DOYLE

I WAS told by a Guard who came to the door. He wasn't one I'd seen before, one of the usual ones. He was only a young fella, skinny and with raw spots all over his neck.

"Missis Spencer?"

He couldn't have been more than twenty. He looked miserable.

"Missis Spencer?"

I knew before he spoke. It clicked inside me when I opened the door. (For years opening that door scared the life out of me. I hated it; it terrified me. We had this screeching bell like an alarm that shook the walls when anyone rang it. It lifted me off the floor, the kids started bawling; it was fuckin' dreadful. You were snared, caught in the act. You looked around to hide whatever you'd been caught with, things that Charlo had left in the hall, things he'd robbed and left there. He changed the bell, after I chewed his ear and nearly wet myself five or six times a day. Bing-bong. Only bad news came through that door; my sister, my daddy, John Paul, Charlo. Bing-bong.) It was the Guard's face that told me before I was ready to know it. He wasn't looking for Charlo; it wasn't the usual. He was scared, and there was something he had to tell me. I felt sorry for the poor young fella, sent in to do the dirty work. The other wasters were out in the car, too lazy and cute to come in and tell me themselves. I asked him in for a cup of tea. He sat in the kitchen with his hat still on him. He told me all about his family.

I SWOONED the first time I saw Charlo. I actually did. I didn't faint or fall on the floor, but my legs went rubbery on me and I giggled. I suddenly knew that I had lungs, because they were empty and collapsing.

Charlo Spencer.

There he was, over there, leaning against the wall.

Fiona nudged me.

"There he is."

I saw him and I knew who she meant. It couldn't have been anyone else, after all I'd heard about him, after all I'd expected. He was with a gang but all by himself. His hands in his pockets with the thumbs hooked over the denim and a fag hanging from his mouth. It got me then and it gets me now: cigarettes are sexy—they're worth the stench and the cancer. Black bomber jacket, parallels, loafers—he was wearing what everyone wore back then, but the uniform was made specially for him. The other boys looked thick and deformed beside him. Tallish, tough-looking, and smooth. In a world of his own, but he knew we were watching him.

We'd been dancing together in a circle, our jackets and jumpers and bags on the floor in front of us, and I was sweating a bit. And I felt the sweat when I saw Charlo. This wasn't a crush—this wasn't David Cassidy or David Essex over there—it was sex. I wanted to go over there and bite him.

He took the fag from his mouth—I could feel the lip coming part of the way before letting go—and blew a gorgeous jet of smoke up into the light. It pushed the old smoke out of its way and charged into the ceiling. Then he fitted the fag back onto his lip, and the hand went back to his pocket. He was elegant; the word doesn't seem to fit there, but that was what he was.

The music. I remember it. Women always do. "Sugar Baby Love." By the Rubettes. It was the perfect song, sweet and fast, corny but mean, high-pitched but definitely masculine. Charlo's theme song, and he didn't know it. He had nothing to do with it; the d.j. had chosen it, just then and there. And it fitted; it was perfect. Looking back at it now. But I didn't know he was going to look at me. I didn't know he was going to move away from the wall and walk. I didn't know he was going to stand in front of me. I didn't even have time to dream it.

He was coming over. The cigarette went onto the floor; he flicked it away, didn't look where it was going. He was coming straight at me, but he wasn't looking. I was shiteing; he was going to walk past me.

"D'you want to dance?"

I let him sweat for a bit.

"Yeah."

His timing was perfect. The Rubettes stopped, and Frankie Valli started singing "My Eyes Adored You." He must have planned it. His arms went through my arms just as Frankie went "My"; his fingers were knitted and on my back by the time Frankie got to "eyes." He'd been drinking. I could smell it, but it didn't matter. He wasn't drunk. His arms rested on my hips and he brought me round and round.

"Though I never laid a hand on you
My eyes adored you—"

I put my head on his shoulder. He had me.

GERARD was the Guard's name. "Gerard, Missis Spencer," he told me when I asked him.

"I'm Paula," I said.

"Yes," he said. "They told me."

"Well, they were right," I said.

He was confused, probably wondering if I was joking or not, probably thinking that it wasn't right for me to be joking at a time like this. He ate his biscuit the way a kid does, quickly, so that he'd be offered another one. He was slower with the second one.

"Where're you from, Gerard?" I asked him.

"Dublin," he said.

"What part?"

"Churchtown," he said.

"I don't know there," I said.

"It's nice," he said.

"Nicer than here, I'd say. Gerard, is it?"

"It's all right," he said.

"D'you live with your parents?"

"Yes."

"Rent-free."

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"No," he said. "I give her two hundred and thirty a month."

I nodded.

He'd forgotten he was a Guard. He'd forgotten to take his cap off. He told me all about his family. His father sold fish to the French; his mammy didn't do much. His sister was in college becoming a vet.

"She's a bit of a genius," he said.

"You didn't go to college yourself, Gerard?"

"No," he said. He blushed.

"It's not for everybody," I said.

I STOPPED being a slut the minute Charlo Spencer started dancing with me. I'll never forget it. People looked at me, and they saw someone different.

Where I grew up—and probably everywhere else—you were a slut or a tight bitch, one or the other, if you were a girl, and usually before you were thirteen. You didn't have to do anything to be a slut. If you were good-looking; if you grew up fast. If you had a sexy walk; if you had clean hair, if you had dirty hair. If you wore platform shoes, and if you didn't. Anything could get you called a "slut." My father called me a "slut" the first time I put on mascara. I had to go back up to the bathroom and take it off. My tears had ruined it anyway. I came back down and he inspected me.

"That's better," he said. Then he smiled. "You don't need it," he said.

My mother stayed out of it.

My sister Carmel was always fighting with him. I remember the screams and the punches. She remembers them as well, but she refuses to remember anything else, the good things about home and my father. It was hard for her, I know; she was the oldest and she had to fight all our fights. Fights—Jesus, they were wars. He tore clothes off her. He set fire to a blouse she'd bought with her first pay money. He dragged her up to the bathroom. He washed her face with a nailbrush. He locked her in our bedroom. He went after her when she got out. He took his belt to her in front of all her friends. He put me and Denise up on his knees and did horsey-horsey—it was embarrassing; I was much too old—while he stared at Carmel. He said that we were his girls, his great girls. He made Carmel go to the kitchen and make the tea; he told my mother to stay where she was.

GERALD SCARFE

"It's for her own good," he said, when Carmel was gone.

She nodded. She agreed with him, even though she was shaking. I remember being terrified. Denise looked from him to her, from him to her.

"Kettle on?" he said, when Carmel came back.

"Yeah."

"Good girl."

He loved her. That was why he did it. Fathers were different then. He'd meant it for the best, being cruel to be kind. Carmel hated him. She remembers nothing else. She got married when she was seventeen.

"I'd have married anyone to get out of that house," she says. "I'd have married any invalid that asked me."

She got pregnant.

"Best thing I ever did."

Then got married.

My brother, Roger, called me a "slut" when I wouldn't let him feel me. I was fourteen; he was twelve. It was dark, in the kitchen. I thought it was a joke at first; he was my little brother. I'd gone in for a drink of water. He followed me. He put his hand up my skirt. I waited for him to tickle me. But it didn't happen. He was grabbing me. I thumped him. "That hurt," I said. I still thought he was messing. He tried to grab me again.

"Come on," he said.

Jesus, I don't know how many times I heard those words over the next few years. "Come on." It never stopped. "Come on." You were a slut if you let fellas put their tongues in your mouth and you were a tight bitch if you didn't—but you could also be a slut if you didn't. One or the other, sometimes both. There was no escape; that was you. Before I was a proper teen-ager, before I knew anything about sex, before I'd even left primary school—I was a slut. My daddy said it, fellas said it, other girls said it, men in vans and lorries said it. My mammy called me in off the street.

"You're getting too old," she said. "You'll get a name."

I helped her with the ironing. I liked being with her. She was good at making you feel necessary.

I began to learn. It was all right to sit or lean on the wall during the day but not when it began to get dark. It wasn't respectable. Sitting on a wall in the dark would get you a name for yourself. You were looking for trouble, parading yourself, making a show of yourself. Getting yourself a bad name. Dying for it.

Smoking was another one. It was all

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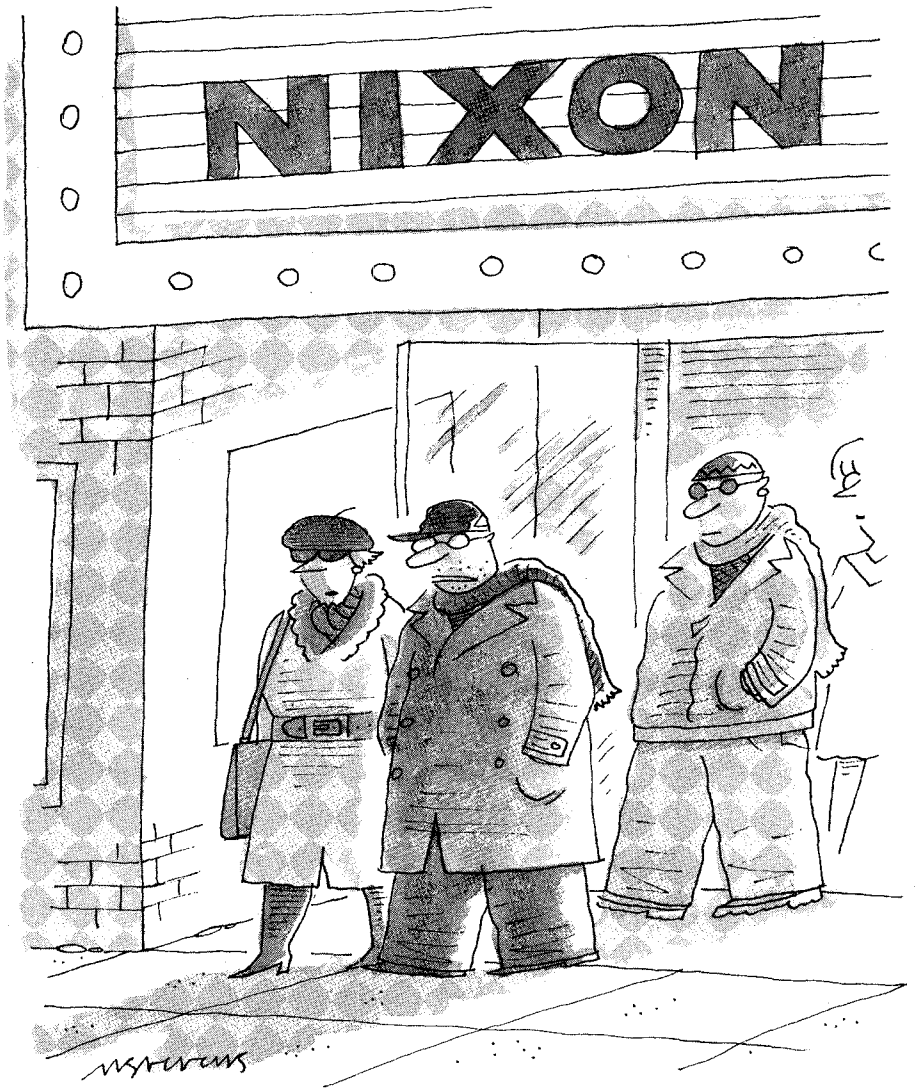

"I didn't like the stamp, I didn't like the opera, and I don't like the movie."

• •

right for a gang of girls to smoke, share the fag, laugh and cough. But it wasn't on for a young one to smoke by herself, say, to walk down the road by herself, smoking. She had the makings of a slut if she did that. Keeping the cigarette in her mouth when she was talking, that made her a definite slut. Smoking Majors, the strongest, made her an absolute prostitute. If you didn't smoke at all you were tight and dry and a Virgin Mary.

Everything made you one thing or the other. It tired you out sometimes. I remember spending ages exhausted and upset. It was nice knowing that boys wanted you, but then you couldn't want them back. If you smiled at more than one, you were a slut; if you didn't smile at all, you were a tight bitch. If you smiled at the wrong boy, you were back to being a slut and you might get a hiding from his girlfriend; and she'd be a slut for pulling your hair, and you'd be one for letting her. Boys could ask you to go with them, and you couldn't ask them. You had to get your friends to let the boys know that you'd say yes if you were asked. That could make you a slut as well, if you got the wrong friend to ask for you. And then there were periods and keeping them secret and never mentioning them and making sure that no one knew and checking to make sure that there was no smell off you and—every day, every day—staying in the toilet till it was properly flushed and the water was clean again and, Jesus, if you went wrong once you were a slut.

"Slut." My little brother.

"Slut." My father.

"Slut." Everyone. They were all in on it.

But it stopped when I started going with Charlo. God, it was great. I could have walked around in my nip with twenty Majors in my mouth, combing my pubic hair, and nobody would have said a word. I was Charlo's girl now, and that made me respectable. Men kept their mouths shut when I went by. They were all scared of Charlo, and I loved that. It was like revenge. I could have pointed out fellas to Charlo, told him to kill them, and he would have. And they knew it. And I knew it. I was a good fighter myself; I could crease any young one that ever got in my way. But being a good fighter made no difference; you were still only a girl and a slut. As far as fellas were concerned, being good in a fight only made you an even bigger slut. They laughed at girls fighting, even though they were scared; girls fought to maim and kill. Girls didn't box. Girls tore flesh off and tried to blind each other. Girls knew the importance of hair. Most boys didn't really fight at all; girls always did. Boys pretended; girls didn't. Boys pretended that girls couldn't fight, and everybody believed them. I was a great fighter. Nobody cared.

Charlo could fight like a girl. Charlo didn't go by the rules, because when he was fighting he didn't know them, he wasn't thinking. Not till the end of a fight, when he stopped, and started planting his kicks, then he was thinking about it; that was when it became really vicious and bad. But he didn't fight much. He didn't have to. One look at Charlo told fellas that they were dead if he felt like it. All I had to do was point.

He walked me home the first night. All the way to my house. "Guitar Man" followed "My Eyes Adored You," and Charlo didn't let go of me. His head moved. I looked up, and his mouth was there, and I opened mine before his got there so he'd see it and know that I wanted to kiss him. I could taste the smoke and the drink and I could nearly swear that he'd had egg and chips for his tea, but it was great. We looped the loop and wore the faces off each other till the end of the song and the d.j. changed the record—he only had one turntable. We both stopped at the exact same time.

"What's your name?" he said.

"Paula," I said. "What's yours?"

"Charlo Spencer," he said.

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His fringe came down over his eyebrows.

"Have you heard of me?"

"No," I said. "Is that short for Charles?"

"Yeah," he said.

"Does your ma call you that as well?" I said.

"Yeah," he said.

He looked at me; he wasn't sure if I was slagging him. I surprised myself sometimes, when I was cheeky. I didn't plan it.

"I like your jacket," I said. He put his hand on it. "It's nice," I said.

Charlo respected me, I have to say that. All the way home to St. Francis Avenue. He didn't try to get his feel or pull me behind a wall or none of the usual stuff. It was nice for a change. We just walked. He didn't say much and most of it was boasting, but that's fellas for you. He was funny. He didn't mind me laughing. He stopped holding my hand whenever we were coming up to people and passing them. I asked him questions. He liked it. I asked if he'd ever been in jail. He was chuffed. I'd given it away; I knew all about him. He told me he'd been in St. Pat's.

"For how long?"

"Three months."

"Jesus. What was it like?"

"All right; not bad."

"It's not really jail though, is it?" I said. "It's only for kids."

"It fuckin' is so jail," he said. "I was in a cell."

"On your own?"

"Sometimes."

"I'd hate that," I said.

He'd been in for robbing. He'd been caught loads of times, shoplifting and with stuff out of stolen cars, mostly radios. Then they found him up on top of an old house in Kinsealy taking the lead off the roof, him and another fella. The old people in the house had phoned the Guards.

"We thought the place was empty," he said. "We made a huge hole in the fuckin' roof. Lovely bit of lead."

I asked him if he still robbed. He said he didn't. All kids robbed; they were wild, and then they stopped when they grew up. They didn't need the buzz. He had a job. He was a builder. One of his little brothers was in Pat's now.

"The same cell?"

"Don't know. He'll see my name if he is. I can't stand the little cunt."

I loved that walk home. It was probably the best part of all the years with him.

THE house was empty. I had the place to myself. Gerard the Garda was gone. A nice poor young fella.

I wasn't surprised. I'd always half expected it. Charlo was dead.

He'd been out of the house for more than two years. I'd thrown him out. Out the door. But we'd never done anything about it, got properly separated. I never got a barring order, didn't need one. He was still my husband. That was why Gerard had called. I was still Mrs. Spencer.

I made another cup of tea—because that's what you do. I didn't go for the vodka. I decided not to. I put an extra spoon of sugar into my tea.

Charlo was dead.

I picked up the crumbs that Gerard had left behind and put them into my mouth. I don't eat biscuits much. I usually don't have the money for them. I always feel a bit queasy after them.

I could taste the extra sugar.

I still loved him. I'd loved him before I even met him, and I never stopped. The minute I saw him, before I saw his face properly, I knew what being in love was. It was dreadful. I was already jealous, already expecting him to leave me, nearly wanting him to be a bastard; I hadn't even heard his voice yet. I loved him when I was throwing him out. I loved him when Gerard rang the bell. I love him now.

Then the shock.

My stomach fell under the table. My ankles ached; my heart charged. All of a sudden. Gerard had told me that Charlo was dead, but he hadn't said how. I'd never asked him. I didn't know how he'd died.

I couldn't pick up the cup. I didn't want it. The table was holding me. I had to stand up. I had to know. I wanted people in the house. I wanted noise. I had to find out. It was vital. He wasn't dead yet. I had to know. No tears yet. No tears. He wasn't dead. Anything could have happened. My mouth opened; a scratch came out. I had to do something. I had to find out. I didn't know how. I had to do something. I had to move.

THE wedding day. Patches of it were wonderful; nothing has changed that. I've good memories and some nice photographs. The ones taken outside the church. I look lovely. Charlo looks handsome. I look modern; you'd never think it was long, long ago. The flares on Charlo's trousers are the big giveaway. And the hair styles. All the hair split down the middle. People stood differently, too, back then, like they weren't confident, like their jackets were too small for them. Still, though, it's not a bad-looking bunch of people. Both families. The aunts and uncles, cousins. Boyfriends and girlfriends, husbands, wives; kids and babies. Two families that were getting bigger by the month. From all over Dublin and some from England. A boyfriend from Limerick, one of my cousin's. He sang "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" later on. My father is smiling. So is Carmel. It was the only time my father smiled that day, I think; he always smiled for the camera. My mother is looking at my father. My brothers look like dwarfs beside Charlo's. The weather was nice; bright. The photographer had us all looking bang into the sun. He was a dreadful eejit.

"Say 'cheddar.' "

I'll put the photographs away now so I don't start going through the rows, counting the dead. It was a good day. That's the word: "good."

"I do."

I wasn't pregnant. So there. It was love. Love and my father. He didn't want us to go with each other—he hated Charlo, called him a "waster," a "criminal," a "skinhead," a "hippy"—so we got engaged. To spite him. A great cluster of jewels to wave under his nose.

THERE was a pay phone in the takeaway. The Chinese girl behind the counter gave me her book. I looked under "Coolock." I didn't know if that was the right station but it was where they'd usually brought Charlo when they'd wanted to have one of their chats with him. There was nothing on that page.

I found it, in the green part at the front of the book. There was a list of all the Dublin stations. There were dozens of them. "Coolock. Public Office—8480811." There were three or four people in the takeaway, waiting for their food.

"Hello. Coolock Garda Station."

They were quick; it hadn't even rung once.

"Is Gerard there?"

"What? Coolock Garda Station."

"Is Gerard there?"

"Gerard who?"

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"I don't know his other name; he's a guard."

"Is he a young lad?"

"Yes," I said.

"Looks a bit like Buster Keaton?"

"Yes."

"Hang on till I see."

I heard laughing and a typewriter. Footsteps and someone singing. "I'm leavin' on a jet plane. Don't know when I'll be back again." Then "Good man," "Gerard," and more laughing.

"Hello?"

"Is that Gerard?"

"Yes."

"This is Paula," I said. "Missis Spencer."

"Hello, Missis Spencer," he said, loud enough for them all to hear.

"What happened to him, Gerard?"

He said nothing.

"How did he die? You never told me."

"God— I'm sorry."

"It's all right. I should've asked."

"I forgot . . ."

"It's all right."

There was no laughing now, or typing.

"He was—he was shot."

"Was he?"

"Yes. One of us—Special Branch."

"Thanks, Gerard. I just wanted to know."

"He was armed," said Gerard.

I didn't want to hear any more; there was no room.

"He killed a woman."

"Who killed a woman?"

"Mister Spencer."

"O.K."

"It'll be on the news."

"O.K.; bye. Thanks."

"Bye."

He lost his temper. And he hit me. He lost his temper. It was as simple as that. And he hit me. He sent me flying across the kitchen. I hit the sink and fell. I felt nothing, only shock. And a spinning in my head. I knew nothing for a while—where I was, who was with me, how come I was on the floor. Then I saw his feet, then his legs, making a triangle with the floor. He seemed way up over me. Miles up. I had to bend back to see him. Then he came down to meet me.

"Y'all right?"

His face, his eyes, were going all over my face, every inch and corner. Looking, searching. Looking for marks, looking for blood. He was worried. His face was full of worry and love. He was scared. He skipped over my eyes. He turned my head and looked at the sides.

"You fell," he said. "I didn't . . ."

I fell. He felled me. I'm looking at it now. Twenty years later. I wouldn't do what he wanted, he was in his moods, I was being smart, he hated me being pregnant, I wasn't his little Paula anymore—and he drew his fist back and he hit me. He hit me. Before he knew it? He drew his own fist back, not me. He aimed at me. He let go. He hit me. He wanted to hurt me. And he did. And he did more than that.

I'm looking at it now, but that isn't what I saw then. I couldn't have coped with it then, the fact that he'd hit me, plain and simple, he'd drawn back his fist and smashed me. Something had gone wrong.

I fell.

I'd been too near him; he hadn't realized.

He'd only been warning me.

He didn't know his own strength.

He had things on his mind.

Anything.

It wouldn't happen again. Anything. It wouldn't happen again. How could it? It had been a mistake. We'd laugh about it later. Remember the time.

We did laugh about it later. That night. And the time after that. And the time after that. Many other nights. Until I couldn't laugh anymore. I wouldn't let myself. Nothing came out when I opened my mouth. Only pain.

What happened?

I said, "Make your own fuckin' tea." That was what happened. Exactly what happened. I provoked him. I always provoked him. I was always to blame. I should have kept my mouth shut. But that didn't work, either. I could provoke him that way as well. Not talking. Talking. Looking at him. Not looking at him. Looking and talking. Sitting, standing. Being in the room. Being.

What happened?

I don't know.

SOMEONE once told me that we never remember pain. Once it's gone, it's gone. A nurse. She told me just before the doctor put my arm back in its socket. She was being nice. She'd seen me before.

"I fell down the stairs again," I told her. "Sorry."

No questions asked. What about the burn on my hand? The missing hair? The teeth? I waited to be asked. Ask me. Ask me. Ask me. I'd tell her. I'd tell them everything. Look at the burn. Ask me about it. Ask.

No.

She was nice, though. She was young. It was Friday night. Her boyfriend was waiting. The doctor never looked at me. He studied parts of me, but he never saw all of me. He never looked at my eyes. Drink, he said to himself. I could see his nose moving, taking in the smell, deciding.

HE told everyone. He even got to my mother before I did. I was pregnant. We were thrilled. Charlo was delighted. He couldn't sit down. He kept looking at me; he couldn't wait. And he told everyone. He was boasting, of course. Only just married, and his mot was already pregnant. What a man. (We didn't know about sperm counts back then, or Charlo would have had a magnifying glass out, counting his.) What an absolute man. It was nice, though. I loved watching him telling people. I was making him so happy. He'd put his arm around me. I'd feel his strength in that arm, and our future. We were going places, everything in front of us.

We were in our flat in Sherrard Street, just married and in love. We had it done up nicely, even though we knew we wouldn't be staying. The minute the baby was born, we'd have our name down for a new house. That was what we wanted, kids and a house, a full house; we didn't mind waiting. It was nice, the flat—except for the smell when you came in the hall door downstairs, the warm, sweating smell of old cabbage and nappies. Even the damp patch in the living room had a pattern that made it look deliberate. Living room, bedroom, kitchen. We shared the bathroom and toilet with four other flats. There were some right dirtbirds and weirdos on our floor. I was always a bit nervous coming out onto the landing. I remember the winter when I was pregnant with Nicola, the mornings; looking out the door to see if the toilet door was open, the cold dash across with the toilet paper; the freezing seat, wiping it first, other people trying the door; the dash back to the flat. The flat was different at first, almost exciting; I'd al-

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ways lived in a house before. There was something cozy about it even though it was actually cold and there were people above and below us as well as beside us; there was always someone coughing or shouting or shifting the furniture. And I liked living in town. We could walk down to the pictures at the Savoy or the Carlton. I loved walking down Gardiner Street; I loved the view down to Talbot Street and the railway bridge. I was glad to be away from my family, and his.

We got the bus out to see them on Sundays, first my family, then Charlo's. I hated those Sundays, although I liked seeing my mother. Sitting there watching my father holding back his rage; wondering what would happen when we left. He never relaxed. Charlo always came and drank his tea, ate his biscuits, and never said a word unless he was asked. My father never looked at him. We'd stay until six.

We'd get up on the first bong of the Angelus and go up to Charlo's parents. It was different there but sometimes as bad. I'd have to wait in Charlo's with his mother, until he got back from the pub with his brothers and father. (He'd stopped bringing me, after we got married.) We'd have to dash for the last bus back to town. I had to make sure I wasn't caught alone in the hall or bathroom or I'd get pawed by a brother. It was horrible; I was terrified Charlo would see something. I'd be blamed; I knew it. His mother was a strange woman. She'd say the odd thing, but she'd never chat; the bare minimum.

"There's your tea, now."

She'd shove a packet of biscuits across the table to me.

"Go on."

She wasn't being unfriendly. She just didn't know how to be friendly. It was easier with the telly on; we didn't have to talk.

The rest of the week was our own.

Charlo came home with paint and sandpaper and nails. He wouldn't let me help him. Not in my condition. A Thin Lizzy poster in the kitchen. We had a telly, a big old one with only two knobs on it, which took ages to warm up. We only had rabbit ears, so we were stuck with just RTE. But we didn't mind; it was all temporary. We watched telly; we went out for walks, the odd drink, the pictures. "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." "Dog Day Afternoon." The Big Tree was our favorite pub. I loved the high ceiling, the painted fruit and leaves in the corners; it was absolutely gorgeous.

"Stop staring at it. They'll charge us extra for the drink." We laughed a lot, all the time.

He always came home. He always looked like he'd run at least part of the way. He did a lot of overtime, especially in the summer months just after we got married. He'd come in late, but never with a smell of drink off him. Not that I was checking. I got a bit lonely, surrounded by other people's noises. I'd turn on the telly and the radio and make noise of my own. I'd hear the key in the door, my heart would explode. He'd come in tired and smiling, dirty from work, and hungry. He'd have his dinner on a tray. We'd talk. We were very, very happy.

I was pregnant. Was I sick? I don't remember. I was proud; I remember that. I felt useful, like I was starting something important. Like I was working. I must have been tired and low at times, I must have been. I have clear memories of being exhausted and nauseated when I was carrying John Paul, and feeling and looking really good when I was having Leanne. I remember crying when I knew I was pregnant with Jack. I didn't want him at all; he wasn't welcome. I didn't want to go through it all over again. I can remember the exact feeling, seriously thinking about killing myself. But I can remember precious little about the first one.

I have a theory about it. Being hit by Charlo the first time knocked everything else out of me. It's all I remember now about that time, up to the birth. It became the most important thing. It became the only thing. One day I was Mrs. Paula Spencer, a young wife and soon to be a mother, soon moving into a new house, in a new place, making my husband's dinner, timing it so it would be just ready for when he came in from work and had a wash. I was a woman listening to the radio. I was aware that my tummy was pressing into the sink as I was washing the spuds. I could feel the sun on my face, coming through the kitchen window. I had to squint a bit, squeeze my eyes shut; they were watering. I was a young, attractive woman with a loving, attractive husband who was bringing home the bacon with a smile on his handsome face. I was loving and loved, sexy and pregnant.

Then I was on the floor and that was the end of my life. The future stopped

"I'm sorry, but he's having his teeth filed to needle-sharp points. Can I take a message?"

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rolling in front of me. Everything stopped.

"Make your own fuckin' tea."

That was what I said. That was what started it, what ended it. I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't said it, what would have happened if I'd gone over and put on the kettle.

"Make your own fuckin' tea."

Me and my big mouth. I'd have made him his tea. And a cup for myself as well. We'd have sat in the living room, me in the armchair we'd got from one of his cousins, and him on the floor. We'd have sat and chatted. He'd have made us another cup. I'd have been tired; I was always tired—I remember that much. We'd have gone to bed. We'd have listened to the neighbors downstairs fighting and the fairy from upstairs bringing in a new boyfriend. I'd have gone to sleep with his arm around me, my bum parked in his lap. I'd have slept like a log. Tomorrow's just another day. And the one after that. And the one after that, and the rest of my life, the rest of our lives. Up to today. Now.

"How was work, love?"

"Fine."

Kiss.

"Ready for a cuppa?"

"Yeah, thanks; I'm parched."

But I'm only codding myself. I know it. It would have happened anyway. That fist was always coming toward me.

"Make your own fuckin' tea."

But sometimes I can't help thinking that I could have avoided it, I could have been cleverer. I could have made that fuckin' tea. I'd done fuck-all all day; it wouldn't have killed me. He'd had his moods before. I'd seen them. I recognized them. I should have seen it coming. Instead, I provoked him. And now, here I am.

"Make your own fuckin' tea."

Now here I am, making my own fuckin' tea, buying my own fuckin' tea. Filling my big fuckin' mouth with tea. If I was in India or Africa I'd be picking my own fuckin' tea. A thirty-nine-year-old widow-woman with a hollow leg. A wreck of a woman with gaps where her teeth should be and a hole where her heart should be. A ruin, a wreck, a failure. What if I'd made that tea?

No, I'm only messing, codding myself. Feeling sorry for myself. (I haven't been drinking, by the way.) I know. It had nothing to do with the tea. It was coming all the time. The fist. The boot. The end. It had nothing to do with me.

I was tired and angry and sweating. My back was beginning to hurt. I'd gotten big with Nicola very early. I'd read nothing; I knew nothing about it. I thought I was carrying some sort of a monster. I didn't know about water retention or anything. My mother told me nothing. I was completely clueless, just pregnant and scared. I was jumpy and exhausted and miserable. The day had crawled. No one to talk to; nowhere to go, too tired to go anywhere; all those stairs to get down and up, I couldn't have been bothered. Half scared that the baby was going to come any minute. Premature and two-headed. A huge yellow-skinned oaf with a head too big to stay upright. I was ugly, fat, and full of someone else's hairy body. My leg hair had gone black. I'd cried all day. I wanted chocolate. I wanted someone to bring me chocolate.

I keep blaming myself. After all the years and the broken bones and teeth and the torture I still keep on blaming myself. I can't help it. What if? What if? He wouldn't have hit me if I hadn't . . . ; none of the other fists and belts would have followed if I hadn't . . . He hit me, he hit his children, he hit other people, he killed a woman—and I keep blaming myself. For provoking him. For not loving him enough; for not showing it. For coming between him and John Paul. For not making love, for making love when I didn't want to. For not talking to him, for not understanding. For drinking and getting old. For not looking after myself. For throwing him out. For killing him. I can dismiss them all. It's easy; they're all unfair. I'm innocent, completely innocent. But they keep coming back. What if? His brother spat at my feet at the funeral: I was to blame. *Have you had a drink, Mrs. Spencer*? The doctor in Casualty. It was settled: I'd slammed the door on my own finger. John Paul looked at the bruises on my face and he hated me. *Did you fall down the stairs, Paula*? *Did you walk into a door, Paula*? *What made him do that, Paula*? *What made you do that, Paula*? *Did you say something to him, Paula*? No. No. No. I'm innocent. I'm innocent. I'm innocent. What if he hadn't hit me

FAMILY ALBUM

ARTHUR GETZ

THE artist Arthur Getz, who died on January 19th at the age of eighty-two, began his long association with *The New Yorker* in the late thirties as a contributor of spot drawings. After serving in the Army during the Second World War, he resumed his career here, and he was one of the remarkable artists—others were Ludwig Bemelmans, Abe Birnbaum, and Charles Martin—who created the reassuring façade behind which the magazine transformed itself in the forties and fifties.

In fifty years at the magazine, Arthur produced two hundred and ten covers—more than any other contributor. He drew inspiration equally from the night clubs of Manhattan and the apple orchards of New England, but his covers, taken as a group, seem really to be about the joy of painting itself. He preferred a high-keyed palette, and laid on his colors with an energy and a directness that often led him to the edge of Abstract Expressionism. The apparent spontaneity of his work was deceptive; each cover was preceded by numberless sketches, and often three or more "finished" versions were offered to us.

For most of his career, Arthur was a member of "the Tuesday group"—artists who got together with the art editor before the weekly art meeting. He was a compact, barrel-chested man with the level gaze and scraggy beard of an Amish farmer. This persona was enhanced by an unvarying wardrobe of flannel and tweed. In fact, Arthur was a widely read man with a well-informed interest in all the arts, particularly dance. He was a natural teacher, and was generous in his response to the work of others. Many *New Yorker* artists still cherish notes of encouragement they received from him early in their careers.

Arthur was not vain, but he never undervalued his own work. In the past few years, interest in it has been rising among collectors, and not long ago he told me that he was now receiving more for his paintings than ever before.

"How much more?" I asked.

"More than *The New Yorker* can afford to pay me," he said proudly.—LEE LORENZ

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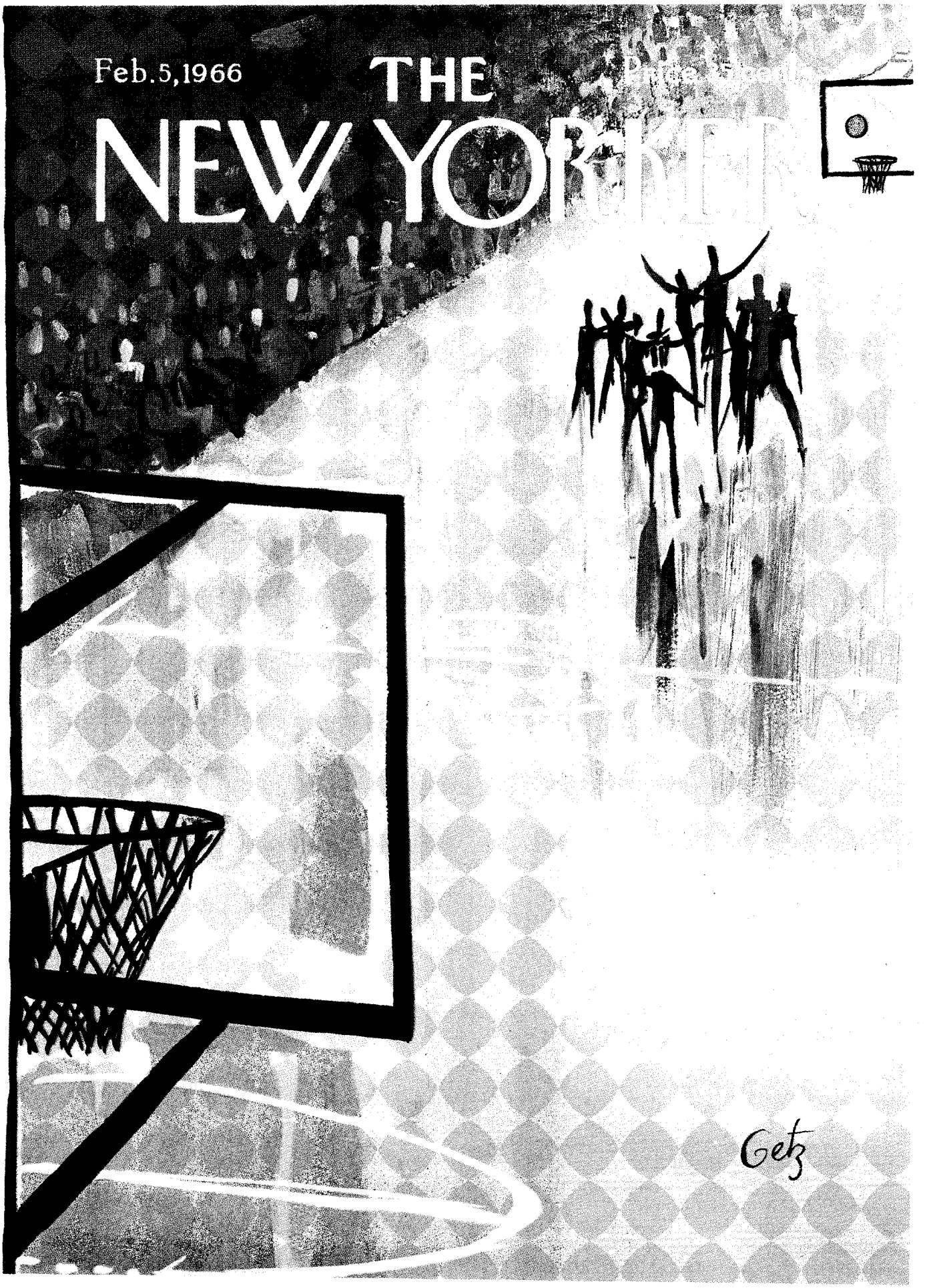

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then? What if I'd been more cheerful? What if I'd made his fuckin' tea?

No.

It was always coming. Before that night; before we got married; before we met. That was Charlo.

Why did you marry him then, Paula?

Fuck off and leave me alone.

He. Hit. Me.

I was feeling low that night. I was feeling low and slimy. Low and slimy and mean. I was fed up and pissed off because he hadn't come home. Again. He hadn't been coming home for the last month. Since I'd started becoming seriously pregnant. Since I'd started looking wet and fat and white. *Why didn't you make the effort, Paula?* He came home later and later with drink on him. *Could you not have had a nice dinner waiting for him, Paula?* He'd say nothing to me. *Or the fire lit?* He'd grunt his answers when I tried to get us talking.

It had been bad for a good while. The honeymoon hadn't lasted long. He still came home, but sat staring at the telly. He wouldn't look at me. Then he came home later. Then later. Drunk and dirty from the site; he didn't even wash himself. Sometimes he'd come in straight after work, smiling—shy-looking—as if he'd decided to start all over again. I'd be thrilled, every time; madly in love. It never lasted, though. There were always rows again. Even before we got married. He got worse. He'd pick rows with me for nothing. Why wasn't I wearing a smock his sister had given me? *Could you not have been more considerate, Paula?* Why had I set the alarm clock wrong? *Could you not have been more careful, Paula?* Why was the floor so dirty? *Well, Paula?* Where's my tea? *Well, Paula?* Make your own fuckin' tea. *Well now, Paula.*

I couldn't give him what he wanted, a pregnant wife who wasn't really pregnant. He saw me expanding and wilting, and he couldn't handle it. He wouldn't. He wanted a baby, but he didn't want anything to do with getting it. I was no good to him, an insult to him. He wanted nothing to do with me the way I was now. He hated what he saw. He hated me. (I'm so wise now, so handy with the analysis. I make it up as I go along. It's all shite. I change my mind every day.) I told him I'd soon have my figure back, after the baby was born. I tried to say it cheerfully, like I'd just thought it up, like I wasn't responding to his eyes. I'd backed into him in bed the night before, trying to make him hard. I wanted to feel him getting bigger against me; I was trying to prove myself wrong. I wanted to prove that I could still make him do it, that he wanted to do it. He loved me. I wanted him to ride me, to fuck me; I didn't care how.

He pushed me back and turned away. He said nothing. I went into the living room to cry. He was snoring when I went back in. There was no room for me in the bed, the way he was lying. I had to get a corner for myself and push with my feet. I lay on the bed. It was cold, and I was sweating. I don't think I slept. I made his sandwiches for him the next morning. He took them and went. He kissed me goodbye.

"Take care of yourself," he said.

I stayed in the flat all day. I spent most of the time deciding whether to visit my mother, until it was too late. I was too tired and heavy. I was restless, but I didn't want to move. I was afraid to move. He came in that night. He'd been drinking. He wasn't drunk, though. It wasn't that late. *We all do stupid things when we're drunk, Paula.* He wasn't drunk. He even washed himself, a sign that he wasn't drunk. He changed his T-shirt. He still had some of his summer tan. He shaved. The two of us in the kitchen. He whistled. "All the Young Dudes," I think it was; an impossible song to whistle. I felt bad now. My imagination had led me astray. Everything was fine. We were happily married. But I wanted to say something.

"Where were you?"

"Campion's."

I had to say something definite. I had to let him know.

"Nice?"

"Yep."

He dried his face with a tea towel. He sat down at the table. I stood looking at him. He looked at me. He looked straight at me. It was a good, honest look. I was feeling so bad, so mean.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, what?"

"The dinner."

"There isn't any."

He laughed. There was no anger in it, no shock, no sarcasm. He was so nice. He looked at the cooker and at me again.

"How come?" He looked away.

"I didn't know if you'd want any."

"What?"

"I didn't know if you'd be home." I didn't know if you loved me. I didn't

HUBRIS

The man in the next office
was born a dwarf.
Mornings, when we wait
for the elevator, he quotes Whitman,
while I shamelessly covet
his gray baseball jacket.
Maybe he doesn't mean
to be a figure of courage
with his cane and his corkscrew knee,
this smart man who can't reach
some sinks. No doubt he'd like
to take the stairs like me,
two at a pop. Instead,
as the elevator numbers fail
to fall to us fast enough,
he waves me on—*It'll come*
eventually, he says with cheer.
He grows ever smaller
in the stairwell. I ascend.

—Mary Karr

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know if you cared. I didn't fuckin' feel like it. I got it all wrong. I'm a cow. I'm a useless cunt.

"I'm here, amn't I?"

I felt bad.

"Amn't I?"

"Yeah." I was a lump, a cow. Of course, he was here. After a hard day's work. Waiting for his dinner.

"It's just," I said. "It's just. You didn't touch it last night. And—"

"I wasn't hungry last night," he said. "And now I am."

"Sorry, Charlo. It's just hard to tell." I had to say something to him, something about the other times. I wasn't inventing things.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't know what to do. I didn't know if you'd be home tonight. Like last night. I don't know where I stand with you, Charlo. I don't."

"Stop talking shite, will yeh?"

"I'm not."

"You are."

"I'm not, Charlo. I mean it."

"Mean what? At least make us a cup of fuckin' tea."

There.

He hit me. He sent me across the kitchen, and I hit the sink and fell. I felt nothing, only shock. A spinning in my head. I knew nothing for a while. I saw nothing; I was empty. Then I saw his legs, making a triangle with the floor. He seemed way up over me. Way up; huge. Then he came down to me. I saw his knees bending; I saw his hand pulling up one of his trouser legs. I saw his face. His eyes were going over my face, every inch, every mark. He was worried. He was shocked and worried. He loved me again. He held my chin. He skipped over my eyes. He couldn't look straight at me. He felt guilty, dreadful. He loved me again. What happened? I provoked him. I was to blame. I should have made his dinner. It was my own fault; there was a pair of us in it. What happened? I don't know. He held my chin and looked at every square inch of my face. He loved me again.

It must have been him. On the ground, under a blanket. First the camera was far off; all you noticed was the car and houses behind it. There was the yellow accident tape, warning people not to go near it, and there were Guards inside the tape. One of them stepped over the tape; he was walking away from the camera.

I can remember nothing about what the reporter said, except two words.

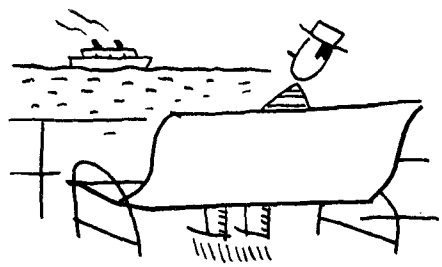
"One man—"

It was the reporter with the Northern accent. He looks nice, like he'd be happier doing something else for a living. I can't think of his name. The only one I can ever remember is Charlie Bird, and it wasn't him.

"One man—"

Then the camera homed in on the car, only it wasn't the car it was aiming at; it was Charlo beside it, in front of it, with the blanket over him, or it might have been something else, but he was covered. He must have been face down because his foot was hanging from the open door, the back of his foot and leg and it disappeared under the cover just before the knee. He must have fallen out of the car. It looked like he'd tripped up getting out. I didn't know the car. I knew the socks. Green diamonds. I'd bought them for him. The car was neatly parked; he'd fallen out onto the path. The houses looked nice—big, with lots of trees. He was far from home.

The second time he hit me, he grabbed my hair and pulled me to him. I saw him changing his mind as he hauled me in. His grip loosened. He stared at me and let go. Another mistake; he hadn't meant it. I saw it in his eyes; that wasn't Charlo. Charlo was the one who let go, not the one who'd grabbed me. I can't remember why; I can't remember exactly when. I was still pregnant. Sunday morning, before we went to Mass. Something to do with breakfast, but I'm not sure. He was talking to me, giving me a lecture or something. I looked away, began to raise my eyes to heaven. (That was a habit he beat out of me.) I felt the rush and the sting on my ear, the air exploded, and I was yanked forward. I stepped quickly to stay on my feet. My ear was hot and huge. I might have screamed. My skin



was coming off the side of my head. I stepped forward, and looked at him. My hands—the palms landed on his chest. His face changed. He relaxed his grip. I said nothing. I watched his face. I wasn't scared now; I hadn't time to be. He took his fingers out of my hair. He might have wiped them on his trousers. I watched him. He looked caught, cornered. He said nothing. He backed off. The side of my head settled into a throb. The left side; I can still feel it. He went into the kitchen. He said nothing. No sorrys, no excuses. I wish I could remember it all; it doesn't matter. I could make it up, and it would still be true. He'd hit me again.

We went to Mass together. He bought me a chocolate bar, a Flake, on the way home. I used to break them before I unwrapped them. Then I'd open the wrapper very carefully, slowly, and I'd take out the bigger pieces, then the smaller ones. Then I'd make a funnel of the wrapper and empty the chocolate dust into my mouth. He watched me while I did it. I didn't offer him any. He smiled. I was making a fool of myself. He liked that. I was his little fool. I didn't care. His smile meant lots of things. I smiled back. Over and done with; another mistake. We went back to my parents' house. It was Sunday. He helped me off the bus. I was his pregnant wife. He walked at my pace, crawled along beside me. We walked side by side. We talked.

He once asked me how I'd got my black eye. I didn't know why, what he was up to. It scared me. We'd just been talking, about something on the telly. We used to watch the news; this was years ago. I think it was during the Hunger Strikes. Charlo was big into the H Blocks. He knew all the names, how many days they'd gone without food; he was an expert. He'd have loved to have been in there with them. I said that to him.

"Yeah," he said back.

He didn't even know I was slagging him. He wore a black armband all around the place, put it on before his trousers every morning. He still ate like a pig, though, and drank like one. We were watching the news, commenting on it, and he asked me where I'd got my black eye. I kept looking at the telly. I was being tested; I was sure I was. There was a right answer. But this came out of nowhere. There hadn't been a row. There

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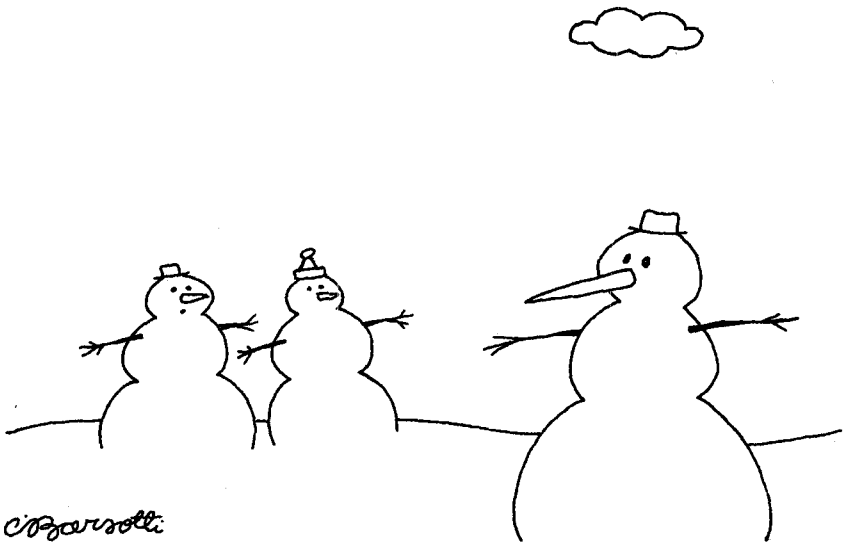

"Would you look at the carrot on that guy!"

• •

wasn't any tension. We'd been getting along fine, chatting away about the world and the H Blocks. It was nice; the trick was to agree with everything he said. Then he came out with it.

"Where'd you get that?"

"What?"

"The eye."

It was a test. I was thumping inside. He was playing with me. There was only one right answer. "I walked into the door."

"Is that right?"

"Yeah."

"Looks sore."

"It's not too bad."

"Good."

He was messing with me, playing. Like a cat with an injured bird. With his black armband, the fucker. Keeping me on my toes, keeping me in my place. Pretending he didn't remember. Pretending he'd never seen black and red around and in that eye before. Pretending he cared. I didn't believe he'd forgotten, not even for a second. He wanted me to think that—or that he was sick, having blackouts, that he was like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a schizophrenic, that I should feel sorry for him and try to understand. I didn't believe it. He was playing with me. Ruining the night, because it was getting too cozy. Only playing. He had me; I could say nothing. I could never fight back. When he wasn't hitting me, he was reminding me that he could hit me. He was reminding me and getting me ready. Like a cat playing with a bird, letting it live a bit longer before he killed it.

He put one of his fingers on the bruise. I made sure I stayed absolutely still. I looked ahead, at the telly. The tip of his finger was freezing. He rested it gently under my eye.

"You must have walked right into it, did you?"

"Yeah; I wasn't looking."

"Which door?"

"Bedroom."

He took his finger away. I could still feel it on my cheekbone. "Were you drinking?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"Yeah."

"Just careless."

"Yeah."

"O.K."

I waited for more. I sat beside him and waited.

HE'D bring me a cup of tea. Or a Flake. That was all it took. A tiny piece of generosity—a kiss, a smile, a joke. I'd grab at anything. And I'd forget. Everything was fine. Everything was normal. That was all it took. I still break them before I unwrap them. I sometimes cry when I eat them.

THE doctor never looked at me. He studied parts of me, but he never looked at my eyes. He never looked at me when he spoke. He never saw me. Drink, he said to himself. I could see his nose twitching, taking in the smell, deciding. None of the doctors looked at me.

I DIDN'T exist. I was a ghost. I walked around in emptiness. People looked away; I wasn't there. They stared at the bruises for a split second, then away, over my shoulder and away. There was nothing there. No one looked; eyes stared everywhere else. I could walk down the street, I could sit in the church at Mass, I could go up for Communion. I could answer the door, I could get on the train, I could go to the shops. I could hand over my money and get my change and stamps. I could push past people and let them pass me. I could say "please" and "thank you." I could smile and say "hello." I could smile and say "goodbye." I could walk through crowds. I could see all these people, but they couldn't see me. They could see the hand that held out the money. They could see the hand that held open the door. They could see the foot that tried on the shoe. They could see the mouth that spoke the words. They could see the hair that was being cut. But they couldn't see me. The woman who wasn't there. The woman who had nothing wrong with her. The woman who was fine. The woman who walked into doors.

They could smell the drink. Aah. They could see the bruises. Aah, now. They could see the bumps. Ah, now, God love her. Their noses led them, but their eyes wouldn't. My mother looked and saw nothing. My father saw nothing, and he loved what he didn't see. My brothers saw nothing. His mother saw nothing. The woman who kept walking into doors.

"How are you?"

"Grand."

Ask me.

In the hospital.

Please, ask me.

In the clinic.

In the church.

Ask me, ask me, ask me. Broken nose, loose teeth, cracked ribs. Ask me.

CHARLO was always with me. He was always there. Behind the curtain was the only time I was alone. His shadow on the curtain. A few minutes. One question. One question. I'd answer;

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I'd tell them everything if they asked.

Ask me.

I'd have told them everything, I swear to God I would have. If they'd asked. I'd have whispered it. If they'd asked first. He pulled my arm behind my back and lifted me off the floor. It would have been easy after that, watching them listening. He hit me. He kicked me there. He burned me here. He did it. He did it. Save me. I'd have told them everything. I just had to be brought behind the curtain, asked the right question.

It was my turn.

"Mrs. Spencer?"

"Yes."

"Doctor will see you now."

I followed the nurse. She held the curtain open for me. She smiled. I'd seen her before; she had a new hair style. Charlo kept my coat. He followed me, as far as the curtain. I was in. I sat on a chair.

"Doctor'll be here in a minute."

I knew her; she'd seen me before. She was from the country somewhere. She looked at me. She nodded at me.

"In the wars again."

"Yes," I said.

She looked at her watch.

"Fell down the stairs again," I told her. "Sorry."

"You poor thing," she said.

She was nice. I didn't want to disturb her. She had a boyfriend of her own; she was bound to have. There was no engagement ring. Maybe he was saving for one, like Charlo had.

"In the dark," she said.

"Yeah," I said. "The bulb was gone."

"God." It wasn't going to happen. It wasn't the right curtain. "It'll all be over in no time," she said.

"Busy tonight?"

"Sure, stop."

There'd be no escape. I could see Charlo's shape walking up and down outside. It would be fine later, when we got back home. He'd be great—I'd learned my lesson. He'd bring me up a cup of tea. He'd get up with the kids in the morning, let me stay in bed. It wasn't so bad. It would be fine for a while.

THAT baby, my fifth, was gone before I knew if it was a boy or a girl. Born too early; born by a fist. A girl. I never saw her. Her name is Sally. ♦

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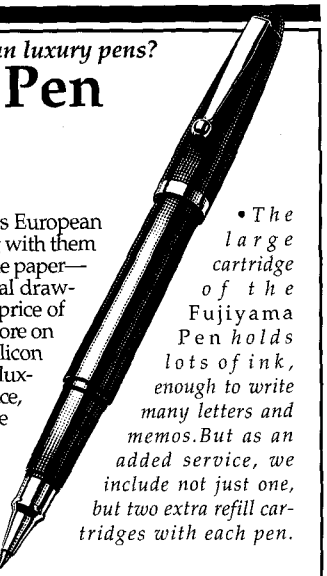

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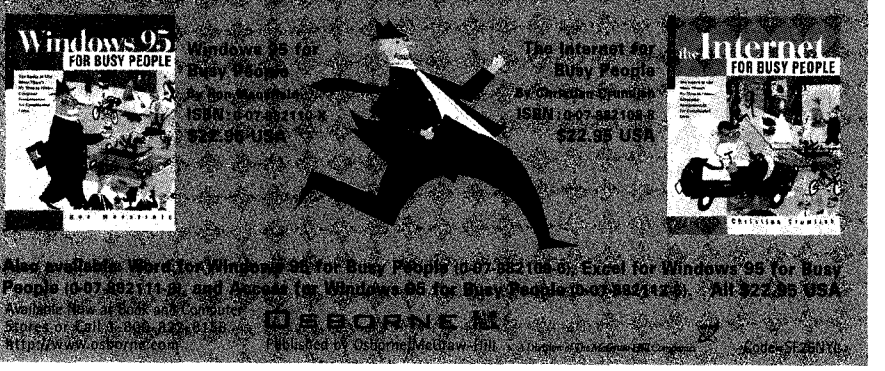

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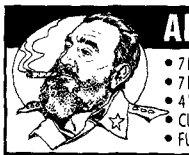

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REVOLUTIONARY THEORIES

What was the War of Independence really about?

BY MICHAEL LIND

WHETHER the United States is a country different from others in detail but not in kind or the unique embodiment of liberal and democratic ideals has long been a topic of debate among politicians and political theorists—and writers of history. Different conceptions of American identity naturally engender rival accounts of American origins. Two new accounts of the American founding—"A Struggle for Power" (Times Books; $35), by Theodore Draper, and "Founding Father" (Free Press; $25), by Richard Brookhiser—offer sharply contrasting visions of the American past and, by implication, of America.

For Draper, the American War of Independence was not primarily a clash of political cultures or a defense of civil liberty. His thesis is summed up in the title of his persuasive and important study: the war is indeed best viewed as "a struggle for power," a geopolitical conflict. Draper observes, "Over the many years that books have been written on the Revolution, there have been different interpretations—nationalist, Progressive, social, institutional, constitutional, imperial, ideological. . . . Nevertheless, one interpretation may be more central to the nature of the Revolution than others. In my view, the Revolution was basically a struggle for power between Great Britain and its American colonies."

Draper's book opens with an account of the "pamphlet war" that broke out in Britain in 1759. The government in London, then winning the American phase of the Seven Years' War (also known as the French and Indian War), had to decide whether to return conquered Canada or the captured Caribbean island of Guadeloupe to France as part of a peace settlement. Draper notes a peculiar aspect of the "Canada versus Guadeloupe" controversy: "Fear of the growth of the colonies appeared in so many pamphlets that it was clearly more than a curious aberration on the part of some nervous British officials." One English pamphleteer warned, "If, Sir, the People of our Colonies find no Check from [French] *Canada*, they will extend themselves, almost, without bounds into the Inland Parts. . . . The possession of *Canada*, far from being necessary to our Safety, may in its Consequence be even dangerous. A Neighbour that keeps us in some Awe, is not always the worst of Neighbours." Another English pamphleteer was even more blunt: "Nothing can secure Britain so much against the revolting of North-America, as the French keeping some footing there, to be a check upon them [for] if we were to acquire all Canada, we should soon find North-America itself too powerful, and too populous to be long governed by us at this distance." Such fears were justified. Once the colonists no longer needed British military power to protect them from the French, they became increasingly resentful of British rule and more willing to contemplate independence.

In Draper's realist history, apparent clashes of political ideals often mask underlying rivalries for power. In recent decades, Draper notes, "the republican thought of Milton, Sydney, Locke and others in the seventeenth century" has "been minutely studied, because it provided the Founding Fathers with an armory of rights, concepts, and rhetoric with which to justify the struggle for independence." But "there was another British tradition," he notes:

> It was mainly concerned with the power rather than the right of a colony to seek independence. This line of thought went back to Maj. John Child's alarm in 1647 about the earliest colonies "growing into a nation"; to James Harrington's reference in 1656 to the colonies' inclination to wean themselves when they "come of age"; to Charles Davenant's warning in 1698 that "Riches, Power and Dominion" made colonies formidable; to Cato's prophecy in 1722 that the colonists would "not be long to seek for Arguments to justify" their desire for independence . . . and to Josiah Tucker's forecast in 1749 that the colonies would feel themselves to be independent as soon as they did not need protection.

Indeed, among the colonists John Adams himself traced the trouble between the colonies and London to the British victory in the Seven Years' War. "Suffice it to say," he wrote, "that immediately upon the conquest of Canada from the French in the year 1759, Great Britain seemed to be seized with a jealousy against the Colonies."

Certainly demographic trends in the late eighteenth century reinforced both American confidence and British anxiety. While the population of England and Wales grew only slowly between 1750 and 1770, from six and a half million to seven and a half million, Draper notes, the population of the colonies almost doubled during that time, reaching well over two million. Benjamin Franklin, when he was still arguing for Anglo-American unity, suggested that the population explosion on the west side of the Atlantic would benefit Britain by increasing the market for British manufactures. But his economic argument was subordinated to a political one: How could an American population that would soon outnumber that of the British Isles be accommodated within the structure of the British Empire?

One possibility, favored by many Americans, was a federal empire, with separate legislatures in Britain and North America, linked only by the person of the monarch—something like nineteenth-century Austria-Hungary, or the twentieth-century British Commonwealth. This idea did not go down well in the Home Counties. Eighteenth-century Englishmen who remembered how despotic kings had used Scottish and Irish subjects against the London Parliament can be forgiven for being cold to a scheme that would have given the Hanoverian kings an independent supply of troops from North America as well as from their Hessian domains. Some Englishmen, indeed, feared that permitting the North American colonists to have their own legislature would

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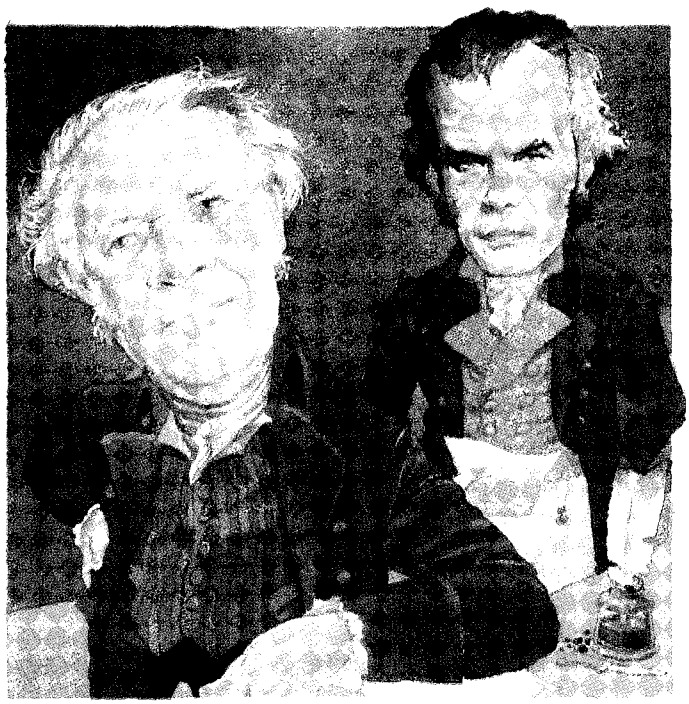
inspire demands for separate parliaments in Ireland and the West Indies (rather in the way that the winning of independence by the Soviet Union's European satellites bolstered demands for self-determination by Russian minorities like the Chechens). Franklin's argument that "England and Scotland were once separate States, under the same king" was bound to backfire. At any rate, a federal empire was not an option, because George III (perhaps mindful of the fate of previous English monarchs who had tried to subordinate Parliament) rejected the idea. Of the colonists he declared, "We must either master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens."

Draper deals his sharpest blows to those who would interpret the American Revolution as the result of the irate and irrepressible republicanism of Americans. The Colonial agitators, he points out, portrayed themselves as staunch monarchists as long as they thought the King might side with them against Parliament. Most readers will be surprised to learn from Draper that Thomas Jefferson "wanted the king to 'dissolve' Parliament if he disapproved of it, as colonial legislatures had been dismissed." When George III sided with Parliament, however, the colonists changed their minds, and decided he was one of the worst tyrants the world had ever seen. The brief flirtation of the colonists with ultraroyalism is fossilized in the Declaration of Independence, which denounces the King, not Parliament, on the theory that from their beginnings the colonies had been subject only to the King—a bit of American propaganda that Draper, sacrificing patriotism to accuracy, shows to be false.

If Draper is right, the American Revolution was not a melodrama but a tragedy—a collision of equally legitimate interests that no compromise could satisfy in the long run. "Who was right?" he asks. "The question cannot be answered without asking another question: Right for whom?" In peering through ideological rhetoric to seek the roots of the American Revolution in the rise of colonial power and the fear it engendered in London, Draper is true to the spirit of Thucydides, whose explanation of the Peloponnesian War provides an epigraph to the book: "The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable."

WHILE Theodore Draper seeks to be the Thucydides of the American Revolution, Richard Brookhiser aspires to be its Plutarch. In "Founding Father" Brookhiser, a senior editor at *National Review*, attempts to provide "not a life history of George Washington, but a moral biography, in the tradition of Plutarch, of Washington as a founder and father of his country." According to Brookhiser, "moral biography has two purposes: to explain its subject, and to shape the minds and hearts of those who read it—not by offering a list of two-hundred-year-old policy prescriptions, but by showing how a great man navigated politics and a life as a public figure." The virtue that Brookhiser—like Donald Kagan, in his recent "moral biography" of Pericles—seeks to inculcate is of the civic or republican variety. Young Americans, having been weaned on William Bennett's books promoting the moral virtues, can now graduate to tales of civic virtue.



In new histories, Theodore Draper follows Thucydides; Richard Brookhiser emulates Plutarch.

WOJCIECH WOLYNSKI

The idea of reviving Plutarchan biography as a genre is intriguing. Unfortunately, Brookhiser gives us too little classical republicanism and too much contemporary psychology: "There is one last service that the political father can perform, even after letting go," he tells us. "That is to be taken into the country's mind—internalized as an object, as psychoanalysts put it. . . . Norman Bates at the end of *Psycho* is the horror version. But internalizing is something everyone must do to grow up." Or, again, "Scanning Washington's life for possible father figures, one finds a few candidates. . . . Washington's early life is too misty to explain the family dynamics." (One wonders what Brookhiser might make of the "family dynamics" of some of Plutarch's subjects—Alcibiades, for example, or Timoleon, whose mother repudiated him after he killed his brother, a tyrant.)

The shadow of Garry Wills poses a somewhat different problem of literary-political family dynamics. Wills and Brookhiser are both protégés of William F. Buckley, Jr.—Wills being an apostate and Brookhiser, who is twenty years his junior, a loyalist—and Brookhiser's thematic meditation on Washington is bound to make many readers think of Wills' 1984 "Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment." Brookhiser describes "Cincinnatus" in his notes as "a subtle and eloquent analysis of the role of resignation in Washington's career, almost obscured in a blizzard of art criticism." Brookhiser's book, though, opens with a very Willsian exegesis of four paintings by John Trumbull in the Capitol, immediately following acknowledgments in which Brookhiser writes, "Twenty years ago I took a course from Garry Wills on Jefferson, which first interested me in Washington." "Founding Father" is not so much Plutarch redux as Garry Wills Lite.

At his best, Brookhiser has the eye for character-revealing detail which

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readers have for centuries admired in his model, Plutarch. (Did you know that Washington enjoyed Sheridan's "The School for Scandal"?) But Washington the man eludes Brookhiser, as he has eluded his other biographers. Brookhiser dismisses as vulgar reductionism the question of whether Washington and other patriot leaders had a material interest in independence: "Another favorite revelation of debunkers has been that Washington was a rich man, who keenly sought to make himself richer." Surely it is significant, though, that in the years leading up to the war Washington and other American investors sought to make fortunes from speculation in Western lands—an enterprise that embroiled London in its costly war in North America with France. In the aftermath of the British victory, the interests of the Colonial land speculators were threatened by London's alarming 1763 proclamation that made it illegal for Americans to settle west of the Alleghenies or to buy land there.

In 1767, Washington, displaying more Machiavellian *virtù* than Stoic virtue, wrote a letter to a surveyor asking him "to secure some of the most valuable Lands in the King's part which I think may be accomplished after a while notwithstanding the Proclamation that restrains it." A passage of the letter which follows deserves to be quoted at length:

> I wou[l]d recommend it to you to keep this whole matter a profound Secret, or trust it only with those in whom you can confide and who can assist you in bringing it to bear by their discoveries of Land and this advice proceeds from several good Reasons and in the first place because I might be censurd for the opinion I have given in respect to the King's Proclamation and then if the Scheme I am now proposing to you was known it might give alarm to others and by putting them upon a Plan of the same nature (before we cou[l]d lay a proper foundation for success ourselves) set the different Interests a clashing and probably in the end overturn the whole all of which may be avoided by a Silent management and the [operation] snugly carried on by you under the pretence of hunting other Game.

This unedifying but revealing passage is not in Brookhiser's "moral biography" of the Founding Father. You will find it on pages 198-99 of Draper. ♦

A HEAVY WORLD

Fury haunts a late novelist's work.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

LAST summer, the dying Congolese novelist, playwright, and poet Sony Labou Tansi told the *Times* reporter Howard French, "Africa is the only continent left that has not found its way. We have this incredible wealth, of resources and spirit, but outsiders like France are just robbing us while blessing our dictators." Tansi made this statement in the remote village of Foufoundou, in his native African state of Congo, where he had found remission from the symptoms of AIDS by way of herbal medicines and incantations that mixed "African traditional healing and Christian evangelism." Tansi told his interviewer, "I had been to hospitals in Brazzaville and in Paris, but they had been unable to do anything for me. It wasn't until I came here, following the voice of a prophet, that my condition really began to change. I should have come long ago." But native herbal concoctions had not helped Tansi's wife, Pierrette, who, lying emaciated and feeble on a mat, claimed that they had made her mouth so sore she could eat nothing but oranges. Two weeks later, both she and Tansi were dead.

Sony Labou Tansi

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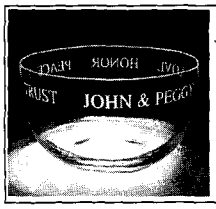

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He was forty-seven and widely considered Central Africa's leading writer. His miserable end betokens the misery of Africa, a continent beset by AIDS, famine, poverty, corruption, tyranny, and genocidal massacre (Idi Amin's Uganda; Rwanda in 1994). The continent's journalists and writers, including Nigeria's Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka, are vulnerable to censorship, imprisonment, exile, and worse. Within recent months, the Nigerian regime of General Sani Abacha executed the playwright and television scenarist Ken Saro-Wiwa, on far-fetched charges, and upped its campaign of intimidation against journalists, confiscating an entire press run of the newsweekly *Tell*. Tansi's novel "The Antipeople" (1983; English translation, from the French, 1988) seethed with political despair. "What good is an ounce of justice in an ocean of shit?" one character asks, and another asks God, "Why did you create men?" A third asserts, "Things here have got beyond God. This is a heavy world. A heavy time." A fourth claims, "This is the most sordid time there has ever been," and the author in his own voice evokes "the huge hole of madness that was forming here; the plagues, the downpour." Even the revolutionary cause, striving to right wrongs, is a "carnivore," clamoring "to be stuffed sometimes with blind bodies."

SONY LABOU TANSI'S next novel, "The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez," which was published in its original French in 1985, has been issued by Heinemann ($10.95) in a translation by Clive Wake. Grotesque, short, and crowded, this work of fiction cultivates fantasy and comedy in a mire of murder and hopeless governmental stagnation. The Francophone writers of Africa, composing in the language of Rimbaud and Céline, have tended more than their Anglophone peers to embrace surrealism—for example, Camara Laye in "The Radiance of the King" (1956) and Yambo Ouologuem in "Bound to Violence" (1968). And Tansi seems to have been reading Gabriel García Márquez: his novel begins with a murder, which, like that in the Colombian writer's "Chronicle of a Death Foretold," everybody knows is coming and yet is helpless to prevent, and he seeks to create, through a thick weave of fabulous incidents, a sense of enchanted communal identity like Macondo's in "One Hundred Years of Solitude." But whereas García Márquez, however bloody and bizarre his narrative, maintains a stately tone and coherence, with a benign undercurrent of nostalgia, Tansi conjures on the edge of fury. "To be a poet nowadays," his foreword defiantly tells us, "is to want to ensure, with all one's strength, with all one's body and with all one's soul, that, in the face of guns, in the face of money (which in its turn becomes a gun), and above all in the face of received wisdom (upon which we poets have the authority to piss), no aspect of human reality is swept into the silence of history."

The novel takes place in Valancia, once the capital of an unnamed country but compelled to yield that honor to Nsanga-Norda, to which were transported "walls, bridges, municipal gardens, town squares, swimming pools, railway stations. . . . Even the water from the artificial lake of the Village of Passions, the seven drawbridges, the thirty-nine mausoleums, the fifteen triumphal arches, the nine Towers of Babel." Scarcely has the reader wrapped his mind around this miracle of transport (reminiscent of the sale of the sea to the gringos, in "The Autumn of the Patriarch") when he is asked to picture "the monster, Yogo Lobotolo Yambi," who, "born of father unknown to the madwoman, Larmani Yongo," was distinguished by

> seven heads crowned with a brass crest, twelve arms of unequal length, one leg in the shape of a grooved column ending in a sort of elephant's foot, thirteen highly polished jagged tusks, with thirteen orifices, four of them shaped like trunks ending in what resembled umbrellas made of solid limestone and which snapped like slow-worms when you touched them.

His mother attempted to drown so ungainly an infant in the estuary, but he always came back, "with the heavy iron bar that was supposed to keep him at the bottom of the sea still

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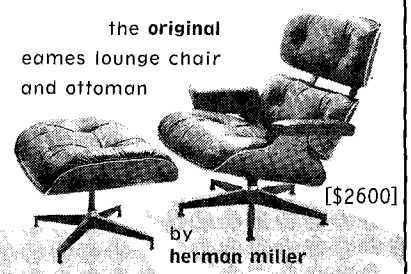

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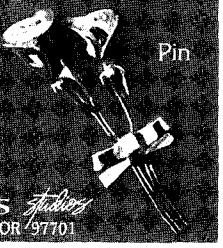

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around his neck." This beast right out of Revelation must symbolize something odious and onerous—the authorities fear that "a monster like that could easily seize power and hold it for centuries"—but whether it was the many-headed colonizers or a homegrown tyrant like Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko I could not decide. Nor was the location of Valancia plain to me: it is on the sea, near some loudly groaning cliffs and an island shaped like Christ's head, and seems to have been colonized not by the Belgians (like Zaire) or the French (like the People's Republic of the Congo, once called the Middle Congo and part of French Equatorial Africa) but by the Portuguese, like Angola, which lies to the south, and where Tansi spent some time. Magic-realist countries don't need a strict geography, of course, but in trying to imagine the central political feature of the novel's landscape, the contrast between coastal, feminist, rumpus-loving Valancia and vain, soulless, inland Nsanga-Norda, I kept wondering what this opposition meant (Luanda versus Brazzaville?) to the book's ideal reader.

I was not the book's ideal reader. Not reading it in French, I was distracted by such English awkwardnesses as (from a single page) "his three teeth of ugliness" and "she was placed at the disposition of her balls." I could not keep up with its torrent of Iberian and African names; there were too many characters, dismembered corpses, and distressed beauties to retain in my linear, Eurocentric mind. It took me a while to figure out that the first-person narrator is a woman, called Gracia; her sisters, Nelanda and Marthalla, abruptly hurl themselves into the sea when their supposed father, Nertez Coma, is publicly shamed by the novel's heroine, Estina Bronzario, who declares that he has been cuckolded. Gracia, rather than drown herself, falls in love with the Nsanga-Nordan Paolo Cerbante and extolls "the smell of love, the water and juice of dream, a small lake of peace the colour of the full moon." Estina Bronzario gets her comeuppance by joining the novel's large population of murder victims, with a wealth of detail some might call delicious:

> Estina Bronzario's body . . . had been cut up into pieces. Her heart had been placed on the fichu with her medals, where it continued to beat. . . . Her two pegs [sic] and her two shoulders lay on a huge log left behind by the high waters of March and April. On the sand, inundated with flies and nibbled by red ants, were her still-smoking intestines. Nearby, her flayed, eyeless head laughed a ghostly laugh. Her stomach had been opened up and emptied of its contents. They, too, were still smoking: beans, pimentos, sticks of yam, vegetables, fish, all the nosh from the centenary banned by the authorities.

I never quite got the significance of the centenary, and the novel's apocalyptic grotesqueries and butcheries wore me out. The central engine of suspense is the endless Beckettian wait for the police to come from Nsanga-Norda and investigate the murder of another Estina, Estina Benta, whose body is repeatedly disinterred and reassembled by the hopeful officials of Valancia.

"This world is an immense corpse fighting to live by every means," runs one of the many epigrammatic interjections that seek, like painted arrows in a traffic jam, to give direction to "The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez." Earlier in the same moonlit patch of eloquence, our dimly descried narrator says, "Perhaps we come into this world to accept the unacceptable. Truth hates us. We have nothing in common with it. Yet, right in front of us, is the deep beauty of things." Unlike Tansi's unrelievedly grim "Antipeople," this novel does have its passages of beauty, of momentary submission to the natural splendor that persists behind human ugliness. Though the author had ten years more to live, a personal dying haunts these pages, along with a black rage at post-colonial Africa. Gracia, as she nears the end of her jangling, tangled tale, praises darkness with a cosmic stoicism worthy of Camus:

> In this country, night has the appearance of divinity. It smells like infinity. Day here will never be more than a pathetic hole of blue, sickly light. . . . Only the night has things to say to the soul. Only it can unite our bodies with the vast truculence of the universe. ♦

SHOWCASE BY RICHARD AVEDON

SECOND WIND

THREE years ago, Frank Langella went to a screening of "Dave," in which he played a poisonous Presidential adviser. "I hadn't seen myself on film for a while," he says. "I hadn't *made* a film for a while." The lights went down, and before long the actor overheard a guy behind him whisper, "Is that Frank *Langella*?" Many people who have seen the actor as a psychologically disintegrating army officer in the Roundabout Theatre's current production of Strindberg's "The Father" (through February 25th), and those who've been on the set of the upcoming movie remake of "Lolita," in which he plays Quilty, have been asking similar questions. A good actor has got better. Why?

Colleagues mention Langella's relationship with Whoopi Goldberg as one reason. He mentions that he and Goldberg had a "very valuable time" last year filming the spring release "Eddie," a light comedy in which he's a Texas billionaire and she's his chauffeur. But he sees the evolution of his work as part of a broader process: aging. Getting older, he says (he's fifty-six), forced him to relinquish his romantic-leading-man past in favor of the kind of vivid character roles that "Dave" and "Lolita" have provided. "If your goal is to grow as an actor, then you have to let nature do its work," he says. "Otherwise, you have to spend far too much time at the plastic surgeon's, trying painfully to be what you were in your youth." Anyone who thinks Langella has mellowed, however, has yet to see him command the Roundabout's stage, where his initial ferocity makes his dissolution at the hands of his household's women all the more unnerving. "Strindberg has a reputation for being stodgy and difficult and terribly misogynistic: all those clichés," Langella says. "But he also shows the fragile side of manhood—a rare thing in a writer." —BRENDAN LEMON

Frank Langella, New York City, January 11, 1996.

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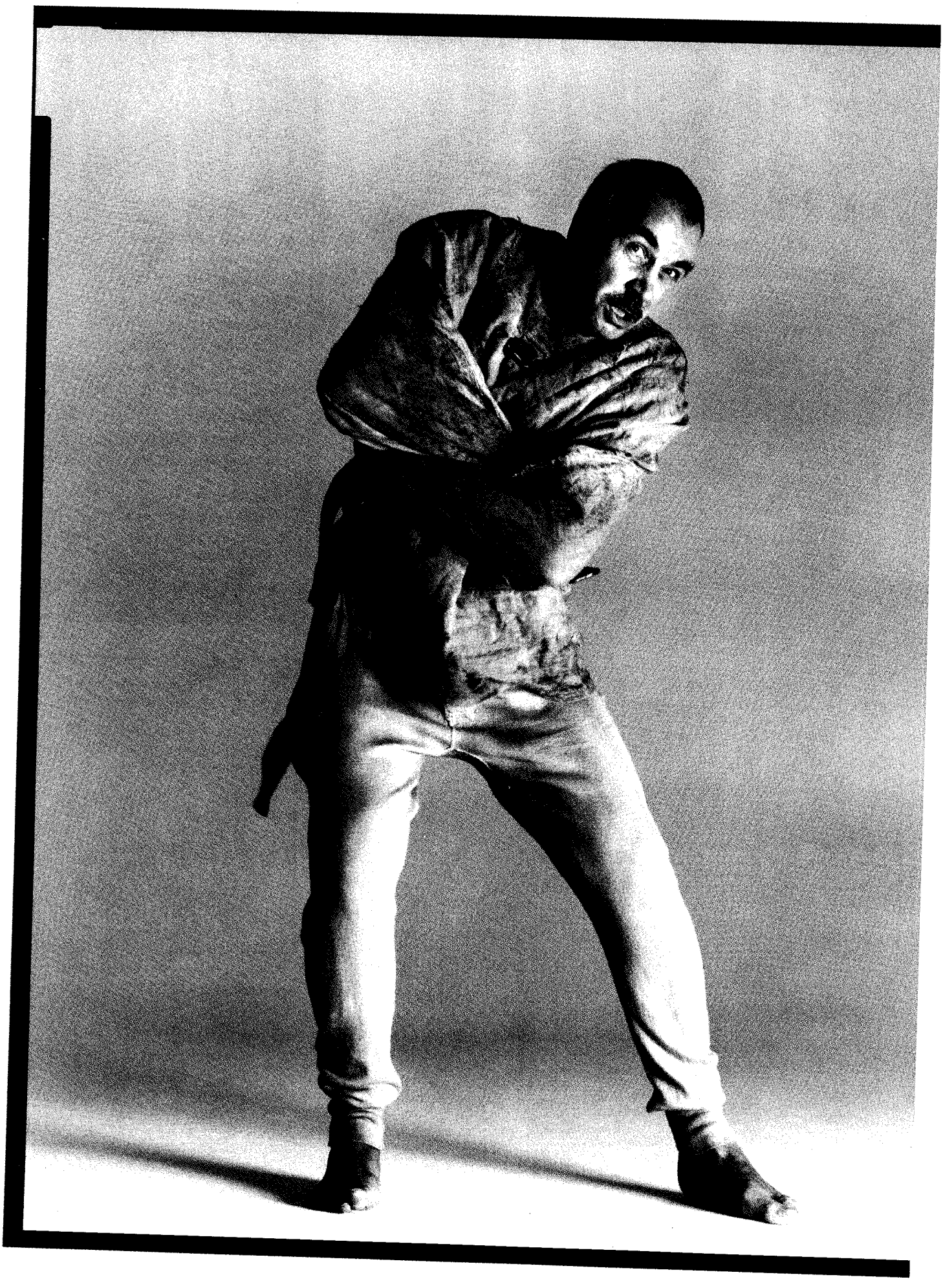

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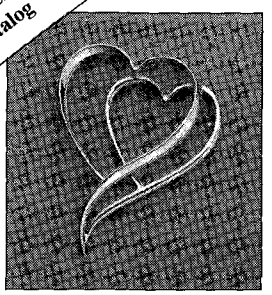

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BRIEFLY NOTED

VERONICA, by Nicholas Christopher (Dial; $22.95). On a snowy night at the "improbable" Greenwich Village corner where Waverly Place intersects itself, Leo meets Veronica, and he trails her through a Manhattan conceived of as a gigantic theme park of the occult. The ensuing romance involves, variously, an invisible dog, black and white magic, time travel, the choicer arcana of Tibetan Buddhism, and a titanic struggle to the death at the top of the Empire State Building. Satisfying as the storytelling is, though, the deeper pleasures here stem from the author's imaginative and idiosyncratic scholarship, by means of which the uncanny is made to seem commonplace and the commonplace unfathomable.

THE PASSION OF ALICE, by Stephanie Grant (Houghton Mifflin; $19.95). Alice Forrester, the narrator of this accomplished first novel, is highly disciplined in the art of suffering. She is twenty-five years old, five feet ten, and ninety-four pounds. Her stately progress toward her own private Calvary is interrupted, however, when she has a heart attack while shopping at the mall: she winds up in the purgatory of Seaview Psychiatric, where embroidered twelve-step slogans decorate the walls and trips to the bathroom are always supervised. Alice's disdain for the world of recovery is so pointed and funny that it makes us uneasy: Are the healthy really so ridiculous? But then a leggy bulimic with an insatiable appetite for breaking rules arrives at Seaview, and suddenly Alice's devotion to denial is—thrillingly, alarmingly—in jeopardy.

BAIZE-COVERED TABLE WITH DECANTER, by Vladimir Makanin; translated from the Russian by Arch Tait (Readers International; $10.95). A lowering and frequently terrifying account—reminiscent of Nabokov's "Invitation to a Beheading"—of both the old Soviet bureaucracy and its more recent incarnation. The hero, a senescent insomniac, simultaneously revisits and anticipates his inquisition at the hands of tormentors with names like the One Who Asks the Questions and the Almost Pretty Woman. Makanin, who won the 1993 Russian Booker Prize, engages the reader through an unusually artful use of the second person and a knack for the apposite aphorism, such as "Men only really wake up when they're knocking ten bells out of their fellow men."

AIN'T GONNA BE THE SAME FOOL TWICE, by April Sinclair (Hyperion; $19.95). A novel of identity politics, this sequel to the charming "Coffee Will Make You Black" poses the question of whether the heroine belongs to the lesbian, the African-American, the heterosexual, or the integrated community. The term for white women is uniformly Miss Ann; gay men eat and dress the best; and in the San Francisco of the mid-seventies it is the norm to refer to people's "energy." While this tale has verve and readability, it is also as literal as a love comic.

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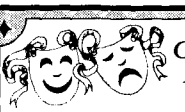

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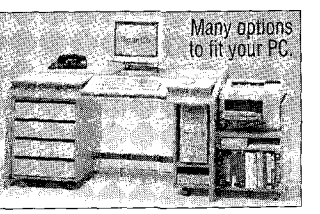

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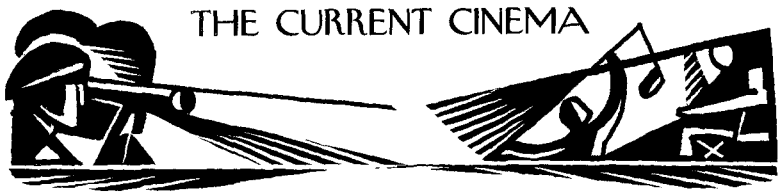
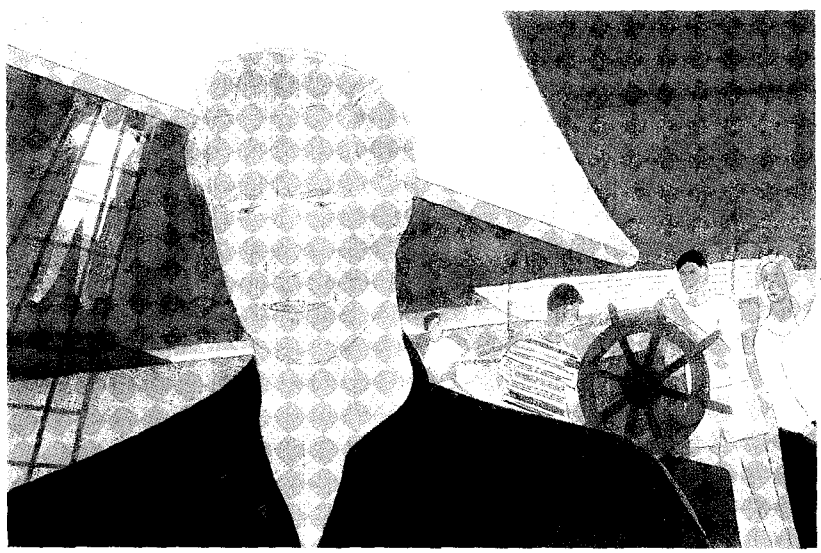


WET AND WILD

A seafaring spectacle and a comic-book action thriller.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

IN most respects, Ridley Scott's "White Squall" is a very dull, square movie, but, as with all Scott's pictures, there's something brave and stubbornly romantic about the whole misbegotten enterprise. The dramatic and visual centerpiece is a big, loud, scary storm at sea, and this movie, if it does nothing else, makes you realize how rare that sort of sequence has become in contemporary films. These days, moviemakers with big budgets don't rely much on the forces of nature to provide the thrills that audiences crave: the current repertoire of visual spectacle in Hollywood films consists almost entirely of bloody shoot-outs and gigantic, billowing explosions. Foreign and independent filmmakers give nature more prominence on the screen but tend to use it to soothe audiences rather than to shake them up: the camera glides serenely through gardens and glades and rolling hills, gently stoking the pastoral fantasies of the older, more genteel viewer. For a visually ambitious director like Scott ("The Duellists," "Blade Runner," "Thelma & Louise"), the prevailing winds of cinematic fashion pose a serious problem. He wants to inspire awe at the mysterious destructive power of nature, but that kind of spectacle is something not many moviegoers seem to respond to anymore: violence fans want man-made mayhem; nature lovers want postcard views of places to retire to. Scott, undaunted (or perhaps just touchingly oblivious of the prospect of empty theatres), heads straight for the storm and hopes we'll stay with him.



Calm before the storm: Jeff Bridges as the captain in "White Squall."

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You have to respect someone who sets such a risky course for himself, and you know that when the movie finally reaches its natural-disaster climax Scott's virtuosic technique will be equal to the event. He's a wizard with a wind machine, and the squall here proves to be even more impressive than the dandy hurricane he whipped up in "1492: Conquest of Paradise" (1992). At the action climax of "White Squall" Scott unleashes a furious torrent of sights and sounds, an all-out assault on the senses: sails rip apart; masts crack; lightning bolts stab into the sea; great sheets of water sweep crew members off the deck; people trapped below scream and flail in

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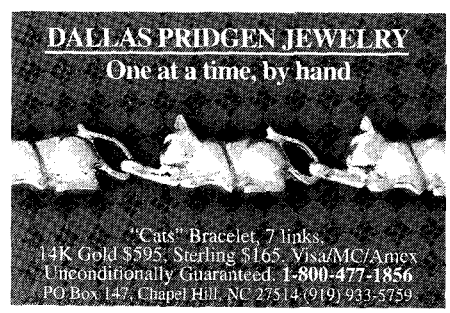
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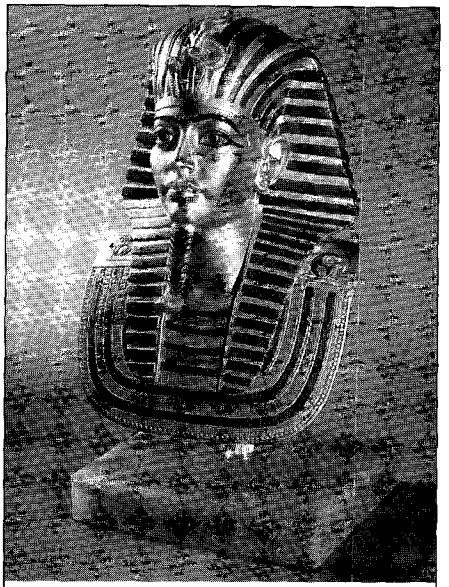

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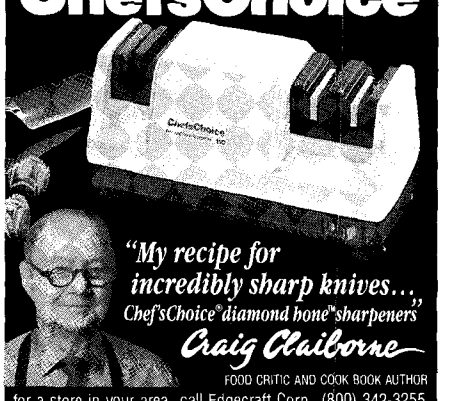
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the rising water; fragile lifeboats struggle to stay upright in the waves; the ship—a sturdy-looking brigantine—lists perilously and then tips over on its side like a toy in a tub. The sequence, which lasts a good fifteen or twenty minutes, conveys the pure, eruptive force of elemental chaos with extraordinary immediacy. Everything's happening at once, too quickly to take in, and yet the scene develops with a kind of agonizing slow-motion suspense—the time-standing-still quality of nightmares.

The sequence is a tour de force of intense, imaginative action filmmaking. It appears obvious that what attracted Scott to "White Squall" was the opportunity to stage this storm and blow viewers out of their seats with old-fashioned, grand-scale adventure. Unfortunately, though, the big scene, like the squall itself, seems to come out of nowhere: a freak occurrence that hits, without warning, near the end of a long, tedious, and largely uneventful voyage. The energy that the movie generates in this extended set piece doesn't feel like an inevitable release of pent-up, accumulated power, because to that point the narrative has had no momentum at all. The screenplay, by Todd Robinson, is based on the story of a real-life shipwreck that took place in 1961. The vessel, called the Albatross, functions as a kind of prep school for teen-age boys. The captain, Christopher Sheldon (Jeff Bridges), and his wife, Alice (Caroline Goodall), who is the ship's doctor, offer students an unusual program of academic instruction combined with sailing experience: on a yearlong voyage, the boys take classes and exams aboard the ship and also serve as its crew. And until the deadly storm strikes, about ninety minutes into the picture, what Robinson and Scott give us is a becalmed cruise through the familiar waters of coming-of-age fiction. If you didn't know that this is a true story, you'd swear that it was just another desperate high-concept concoction: "Dead Poets Society" on a boat. (The students' onboard English teacher, played by John Savage, booms out lines from Shakespeare with annoying regularity.) In scene after scene, the boys fight, bond, learn valuable lessons about courage and coöperation, and, of course, become men. As in "Dead Poets Society," which was set at around the same time, the young characters' major problems are sexual inexperience, intellectual insecurity, and demanding, rigid fathers. And, although that isn't, all things considered, a terribly heavy load of emotional distress, the movie treats the kids' little crises as if they were the stuff of the most compelling drama. For a while, you fear that the movie's title refers not to an actual storm but, rather, to the deafening sound of middle-class Caucasian teenagers complaining about bad dads.

And after the squall, which kills off a handful of characters, the movie returns to dry land for a wobbly dénouement at a hearing, where a panel of investigators tries to determine whether Sheldon is responsible for the wreck, and the boys, to the accompaniment of swelling music, rally round their stern but fair surrogate father. (In these final scenes, "Dead Poets Society" morphs into "Scent of a Woman.") Bridges, who has radiated laconic, leathery authority throughout the picture, gracefully shades the character's idealized masculinity into a subtle portrait of a man haunted by self-doubt and regret, but there's only so much he can do; in the end, he still has to hug all the boys.

It's a shame that a director as talented as Ridley Scott feels the need to soften the impact of his high-adventure filmmaking with a gauzy wrapping of banality and sentimentality. As "White Squall" convincingly demonstrates in the movie's one great sequence, nature doesn't pull its punches; artists shouldn't, either. For a few stirring minutes Scott reanimates some of the primitive appeal of the movies, but he gets where he's going too slowly and returns much too quickly, as if frightened by his own daring. Finally, he can't quite bring himself to go down with the ship.

COMPARED with the odd, frustrating "White Squall," even a modestly berserk contemporary action picture like Robert Rodriguez's "From Dusk till Dawn" seems rather comforting; this movie, at least, confines itself to unnatural disasters, and delivers them with the confidence that it's giving viewers exactly what they expect. "From Dusk till Dawn" provides a gunfight and a nifty explosion before the opening credits have rolled, so you know you're in good hands, and, although the screenplay, by Quentin Tarantino, makes a sharp swerve halfway through, the movie is never in serious danger of derailing. It just switches from one genre track to another; postmodern passengers are far too cool to be thrown by moves like that. And by then the change of direction is welcome. Rodriguez ("El Mariachi," "Desperado") and Tarantino are nominally col-

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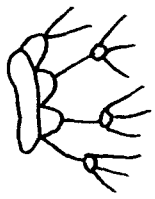
laborators here, but their sensibilities don't so much mesh as simply take turns: the first half feels like Tarantino's movie, the second half like Rodriguez's. After the entertaining opening salvo of violence, the picture becomes for a while a self-conscious bad-guys-on-the-lam modern Western. A pair of bank robbers, Seth Gecko (George Clooney) and his psychotic brother, Richie (Tarantino), streak through the Southwest toward the Mexican border, pausing only to hijack getaway vehicles and take hostages. At a scuzzy motel, the Geckos capture a widowed ex-preacher, Jacob Fuller (Harvey Keitel), and his kids, Kate (Juliette Lewis) and Scott (Ernest Liu); the Fullers' big, cozy recreational vehicle takes the newly extended family into Mexico.



Most of this first section of "From Dusk till Dawn" consists of long, tense scenes of a type that should be mighty familiar to viewers of "Reservoir Dogs" and "Pulp Fiction": men with guns babble about whatever comes into their heads while they're threatening defenseless people with grievous bodily harm. At this point in Tarantino's career, virtually every scene he writes is a variant of the infamous "Stuck in the Middle with You" sequence from "Reservoir Dogs," in which Michael Madsen almost literally talked the ear off a bound, gagged prisoner. This is an ingenious and useful technique: it allows Tarantino to indulge in loony, digressive verbal riffs without losing the audience's attention. But, once you get the idea that the whole movie is going to play that way, your patience starts to wear thin: you feel like a hostage to Tarantino's motormouth whimsy, and the suspense curdles into something that's merely nasty and unpleasant.

Until the crooks and their prisoners reach Mexico, "From Dusk till Dawn" sticks to the Tarantino formula, and Rodriguez, dismayingly, seems to sacrifice his own distinctive personality as a filmmaker. Rodriguez doesn't generally waste a lot of time building tension; he's at his happiest when he's staging wild, elaborately edited comic-book action sequences, and he's too antsy and too generous-spirited to withhold these pleasures for long. He does his best to restrain himself—to go along for Tarantino's ride—in the first half of the picture, but you can feel his relief when the movie finally crosses the border into *his* territory. In Mexico, the characters quickly find the bar where the Geckos are to rendezvous with a man named Carlos, and the meeting place proves to be a hilariously garish roadhouse called the Titty Twister, whose neon-riot exterior promises lowdown, unsubtle erotic delights within. (The bartender tells the Geckos and the Fullers that the establishment admits only bikers and truckers, but he relents after Fuller argues that their R.V. should count as a truck.) And, once the fugitives and hostages are inside, all hell breaks loose. A curvy dancer (Salma Hayek) does a slinky bump-and-grind with a snake wrapped around her, and then, for her big finish, sprouts fangs and turns into a vampire. From this point on, the main characters, plus a couple of other unsuspecting patrons (played by Tom Savini and Fred Williamson), fight off wave after wave of the undead, who, like villains in a Hong Kong thriller, are numerous, relentless, and absurdly acrobatic. The abrupt shift to lurid horror-comics style is just what Rodriguez needs to get his juices flowing after the long back-seat snooze he took in the movie's first hour; he grabs the wheel, floors the accelerator, and zooms recklessly to the finish line, vampires bouncing off his bumper all the way.

This second hour of "From Dusk till Dawn" is cheesy, derivative (mostly of "Night of the Living Dead" and its sequels, and of John Carpenter's lively "Rio Bravo" rip-off, "Assault on Precinct 13"), and, ultimately, a little wearying. But it's unpretentious and insanely cheerful. And Rodriguez's penchant for weird weaponry, non-stop stunts, and samurai-speed editing almost succeeds in redeeming the picture's sluggish first half: for once, the logorrheic apprehension that Tarantino likes to build up actually has some sort of payoff. Rodriguez, who's only twenty-seven, also shows a nice touch with the actors. Keitel doesn't need much help; he is, as usual, effortlessly convincing. But Tarantino and Lewis, who both tend to be unbearably mannered, give credible, low-key performances, too. (Whatever Rodriguez told them, he should sell it to the directors of their future films.) And Clooney is a real surprise: he's a bland hunk in "E.R.," but in this B-movie setting he turns into a funny, charismatic tough guy. As movie spectacle goes, "From Dusk till Dawn" is just junk food for audiences' hungry eyes. But these days you have to take what you can get, and the whoppers Rodriguez serves up are tastier than most. ♦

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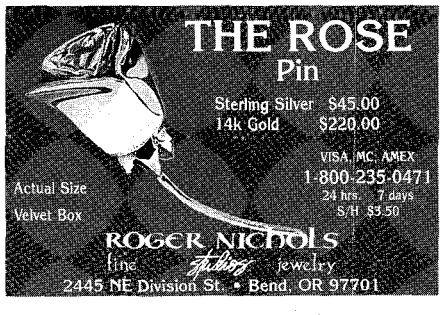

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LOVANO THE GREAT

A tenor-saxophone master keeps lyricism alive.

BY WHITNEY BALLIETT

FOR the past ten or fifteen years, jazz, like much of the rest of American culture, has been running in place. Instead of originators, there have been neo-swing musicians, neo-beboppers, neo-hard-boppers, neo-big bands, neo-avant-gardists, neo-stride pianists, neo-New Orleans players, and neo-Dixielanders. Among these, of course, are neo-Armstrongs, neo-Beiderbeckes, neo-Hacketts, neo-Davises, neo-Getzes, and neo-Coltranes. What is particularly nettlesome about this stasis is the neo-hard-bop tenor saxophonists. They continue, like their forebears, to play as if they were grappling with their listeners, and to flaunt overweening wooden tones. If the four great lyrical progenitors of the tenor saxophone—Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Ben Webster, and Don Byas—were poetic, the neo-hard-boppers are prosy and matter-of-fact. You need to go back every so often and listen to Hawkins's "Sweet Lorraine," to Webster's ballads with strings, to Young's "Back to the Land," and to Byas's "Harvard Blues" to make sure that such beauty of tone and melodic line really existed.

But a savior has been slowly materializing in the nineties—the astonishing tenor saxophonist and composer Joe Lovano. (He also effortlessly plays the soprano, alto, and C-melody saxophones, a variety of clarinets, and drums.) Born in Cleveland in 1952, the son of a local tenor saxophonist, Lovano attended the Berklee School of Music and passed through the Woody Herman band, the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis band, and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. He worked with the drummer Paul Motian and with the forward-looking guitarists John Scofield and Bill Frisell. And he listened. In the liner notes of "Tenor Legacy," the 1994 album he made with Joshua Redman, he lists sixty or so saxophonists whom he has played with or studied, or both: among them are masters like Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon; old modernists like Steve Lacy, Phil Woods, Lee Konitz, Johnny Griffin, and Dewey Redman; Lester Youngites like Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, and Jimmy Giuffre; and Young Turks like Redman, Branford Marsalis, and Kenny Garrett. Other models he has mentioned at one time or another include Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, Jackie McLean, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman. With so much in his hat, Lovano can move anywhere he wants in jazz with consummate ease. He can play tonally and atonally. He can play with a traditional rhythm section and with a "free" one. He can be as hard as Coltrane and as soft as Parker. He can play a-cappella solos and he can fit into tightly organized situations. He can play romantic ballads and he can improvise on themes by Charles Ives and William Grant Still.

In the words of the composer and conductor Gunther Schuller, Lovano has a "sovereign command of his instrument(s)." He has a big tone, not unlike the tones of Chu Berry and Don Byas, and he uses a vibrato, when it is meet, at slow tempos. Most hard-bop tenor saxophonists are monochromatic, but Lovano has a daring and exhilarating sense of dynamics and tonal color. He can play loud and suddenly become sotto-voce. He will dodge softly up and down his registers, fashioning delicate, sliding runs; mix them with silences and with half-time phrases; and often end with two or three descending notes, almost below hearing, that rend you, that make jazz the wonder it can be.

BUT there are two Lovanos. One is the heedless, hard-driving Lovano who turns up at the Village Vanguard and other clubs, either with one other horn and a rhythm section or with just a rhythm section. This Lovano solos at great length; he pushes his solos before him, keeping them

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airborne and swinging. He teaches and preaches, often going up on his toes, his eyes tight shut. (He is hefty, and has a Vandyke and receding hair.) This Lovano appears on a brand-new two-disk Blue Note release, "Joe Lovano: Live at the Village Vanguard." The first disk, made in March of 1994, has the brilliant iconoclast Tom Harrell on trumpet and flugelhorn (he and Lovano, hand in glove, have recorded and worked together countless times), Anthony Cox on bass, and Billy Hart on drums. Many of the numbers flirt with atonality (five are by Lovano, one is by Harrell, and one is by Vernon Duke), and the bass and drums play free, circular time. There is an introverted "I Can't Get Started," in which the original melody occasionally passes by, masked, and Harrell, on flugelhorn, showers us with dozens of beautifully struck notes. Harrell has a marked gift for writing handsome, mournful melodies, and on his "Sail Away" both he and Lovano are reverential.

On the second disk, made a little over a year ago, Lovano appears with Mulgrew Miller on piano, young Christian McBride on bass, and Lewis Nash on drums. (A similar lineup is appearing at the Blue Note this week, with Jim Hall, on guitar, in place of Miller.) It's a blowing session. Lovano plays two Coltranes, "Lonnie's Lament" and "26-2"; Monk's rarely heard "Reflections"; Charlie Parker's "Little Willie Leaps"; and Charles Mingus's "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," done as a Lovano solo. Miller is a fashionably florid pianist, and McBride, who sometimes allows his time to get away from him when he solos, keeps a tight rein. He is even rather dazzling.

The other Lovano—the lyrical, moving Lovano—emerges when the musical climate is the most controlled. This happens on three recent albums. The first, newly released in this country on the Evidence label, was recorded at a jazz festival in Amiens in 1989 and is called "Joe Lovano Wind Ensemble: Worlds." Lovano's old friends Bill Frisell and Paul Motian are present, and so are Tim Hagans, on trumpet; Gary Valente, on trombone; and the Frenchman Henri Texier, on bass. The lyric soprano Judi Silvano, now Lovano's wife, appears on all of the seven connected numbers that make up "Worlds." Wonderful things happen throughout: the rampaging collective ensemble on the title track; Lovano's two-minute a-cappella ad-lib solo at the start of "Tafabalewa Square" and Silvano's skirling solo over a drone background; and Kenny Werner's affecting ballad, "Two Hearts," in which Silvano sings the lyrics with Lovano echoing her, Lovano plays a soft, mercurial solo, and Silvano returns to the lyrics with Lovano again behind her.

The second album, "Mike Mainieri: An American Diary" (NYC Records), is an oddity. On hand are Mainieri on vibraphone and marimbas, Lovano on his various reeds, Eddie Gomez on bass, and Peter Erskine on drums. The materials include Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere," a Frank Zappa composition, a spiritual, a Scottish folk melody, and snippets from Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, and Samuel Barber. Lovano is buoyant and even ardent on the spiritual and the folk air, but listen, in particular, to the little lullaby he slips in at the end of his opening solo on "Somewhere."

The third album is the already celebrated "Rush Hour," on Blue Note. Nine of the thirteen numbers were arranged and/or written by Gunther Schuller, and are Third Stream music—the jazz-classical hybrid pioneered by Schuller in the late fifties. These are played by two different ensembles: one is made up of fifteen strings, flute, harp, guitar, two string basses, and drums; the other is made up of five reeds, two horns, trumpet, trombone, tuba, vibraphone, two string basses, electric guitar, and drums. The remaining numbers are marvellously idiosyncratic Lovano confections. He plays tenor and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet, and drums on one, and is joined by Judi Silvano. There is a Lovano-Silvano duet, a Lovano duet with himself on tenor saxophone and drums, and, at the end of the record, a stunning three-and-a-half-minute a-cappella Lovano tenor solo on Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge." The orchestral muscle on Schuller's "Headin' Out, Movin' In" and "Rush Hour on 23rd Street" sometimes threatens to flatten Lovano, but the rest of Schuller's arrangements are lyrical and supportive. They include three ballads: Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss," Matt Dennis's "Angel Eyes," and Vernon Duke's "The Love I Long For"; a shadowy, secret version of Monk's "Crepuscule with Nellie"; an elbowing Mingus piece, "Peggy's Blue Skylight"; and the mournful "Lament for M," Schuller's tone poem for his late wife. About four and a half minutes into the last, Lovano plays several soft descending notes, backed by harp, that nearly make you weep. ♦

Saxophonist Joe Lovano: Both hard-driving and melodic, he can move anywhere he wants in jazz with consummate ease.

RICHARD MERKIN

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HILLARY PILLORIED

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

FEBRUARY 2ND: Barbara Feinman is called to testify before the Senate Whitewater Committee as to whether she saw the Rose Law Firm documents on the third floor of the White House. Feinman collaborated with Hillary Rodham Clinton on her book, "It Takes a Village," but received no acknowledgment from the First Lady. She tells the senators that she did not see the subpoenaed billing records but "did find Mrs. Clinton's habit of chewing computer printouts into little balls and swallowing them a bit peculiar." Mrs. Clinton explained to her, she said, that it was "a new high-fibre diet" she was trying.

FEBRUARY 13TH: The Washington *Times* prints a leaked extract from Hillary Clinton's January 26th grand-jury testimony:

Mr. Starr: When did you last see the documents?
Mrs. Clinton: I have no recollection of that.
Mr. Starr: Is your name Hillary Rodham Clinton?
Mrs. Clinton: I have no recollection of that.
Mr. Starr: Do you live in the White House?
Mrs. Clinton: You'll have to be more specific. I've lived in a number of white houses.

MARCH 12TH: F.B.I. experts report that Mrs. Clinton's fingerprints are on the documents. However, the revelation is complicated by the fact that so are O. J. Simpson's.

MARCH 14TH: Hillary Clinton hires Johnnie Cochran.

MARCH 18TH: Cochran demands full DNA testing of documents.

APRIL 15TH: Senator Alfonse D'Amato, Whitewater Committee chairman, asks for six billion dollars to continue his investigation until the year 2021 A.D.

MAY 17TH: While vacuuming under the First Couple's bed, White House janitor Manuel García finds a deed to a choice waterfront plot in the name of Hillary Rodham, witnessed by Vincent Foster. Attached to the deed is a Post-it note bearing Foster's handwriting: "If this gets out, we're in MAJOR doo-doo."

MAY 20TH: Mrs. Clinton's lawyer, Johnnie Cochran, says of the new controversial document, "If it's just a Post-it, we aren't toasted."

AUGUST 25TH: On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, the White House announces that Mrs. Clinton will immediately embark on a weeklong good-will tour of mutton ranches in New Zealand.

AUGUST 26TH: *Times* columnist William Safire writes that Mrs. Clinton should not be permitted to leave the country.

TOM BACHTELL

AUGUST 28TH: President Clinton issues a statement saying that if he weren't President he'd "chop off Safire's chestnuts and feed them to the hogs." White House spokesman Mike McCurry later says Clinton was merely using a "colorful Southern expression indicating honest disagreement."

SEPTEMBER 5TH: In an interview with *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift, Hillary Clinton suggests that the Rose Law Firm documents were put there "by Richard Nixon." In a somewhat rambling explanation, she ventures that "Carolyn [Huber] first found the documents in August. The same month Nixon resigned." Nixon's own secretary was Rose Mary Woods. "Rose Mary Woods, Rose Law Firm, see?" "Finally," the First Lady says, "Nixon's never forgiven me for working on the impeachment committee back in '74. So it all fits. I mean, right? Right?"

SEPTEMBER 12TH: First Cat Socks wanders into the East Room of the White House during a Presidential press conference and in full view of TV cameras coughs up a hairball. Upon closer examination by ABC's Brit Hume, the hairball turns out to be a length of dictation tape. When it is played, Mrs. Clinton's voice is heard saying to her chief of staff, Margaret Williams, "Where are the [expletive deleted] billing records you got out of Vince's office? I had them right here. We don't want Carolyn to find them."

SEPTEMBER 13TH: Mrs. Clinton denies that it is her voice on the tape. Her lawyer, Johnnie Cochran, says of the evidence, "If there's feline spit, you must acquit." ♦

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